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 7 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND

 8 BIMONTHLY MEETING

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 14 2200 University Avenue

 15 St. Paul, Minnesota

 16 Thursday, October 3, 2024

 17 5:40 p.m.

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 1 APPEARANCES:

 2 REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND SSB STAFF

 3 Judy Sanders, Chairperson Dave Andrews

 4 Ryan Haenze, Vice Chair Jennifer Beilke

 5 Sue Fager Jon Benson

 6 Samantha Flax Brianna Holeman

 7 Hannah Harriman Lisa Rogers

 8 Tom Heinl

 9 Rob Hobson

 10 Thea Kramer

 11 Patricia McGee

 12 Jeff Milhelich

 13 Corbb O'Connor

 14 Justin Salisbury

 15 Ryan Strunk

 16 Patrick Vellia

 17

 18 ALSO PRESENT:

 19 Natasha Jerde, Director of SSB

 20 Nyia Vang, State Program Administrator

 21

 22

 23 Whereupon, the following proceedings

 24 were duly had and entered of record, to-wit:

 25

 3

 1 MS. SANDERS: Okay. I am going to

 2 call the meeting to order. Everybody ready to

 3 pretend like we are in order now?

 4 Okay. As we, I think all heard, the

 5 Zoom people heard that we are starting the meeting

 6 now and when the food comes we will get it served

 7 and then we will continue to eat while we meet. We

 8 are nothing if not flexible.

 9 So we will begin, then, to tell you

 10 that I'm going to do the roll call and I just have

 11 to find it. And then we will go through the

 12 agenda. There are a couple of things that are not

 13 on the agenda that we are going to deal with.

 14 Okay. I do have the roll call so I

 15 can call it.

 16 Connie Berg.

 17 (No response.)

 18 MS. SANDERS: Not here.

 19 I know that Diane Dohnelik is excused.

 20 Frank Eller.

 21 MR. O'CONNOR: He reported being sick.

 22 MS. SANDERS: Oh, he's sick? Okay.

 23 Sue Fager.

 24 MS. FAGER: Here.

 25 MS. SANDERS: Sue is here in person.

 4

 1 Sam Flax.

 2 MS. FLAX: Here.

 3 MS. SANDERS: Sam, are you on Zoom or

 4 are you here?

 5 MS. FLAX: I'm here, I just turned on

 6 my mike so everyone could hear me.

 7 MS. SANDERS: Oh, okay.

 8 Hannah Harriman.

 9 MS. HARRIMAN: Hi, I'm here and I'm on

 10 Zoom.

 11 MS. SANDERS: Ryan Haenze.

 12 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze here on Zoom.

 13 MS. SANDERS: Alrighty. Tom Heinl.

 14 MR. HEINL: Here on the phone.

 15 MS. SANDERS: Yeah, well, just a

 16 different method of Zoom.

 17 Rob Hobson.

 18 MR. HOBSON: I am here in person.

 19 MS. SANDERS: Yeah.

 20 Thea Kramer.

 21 MS. KRAMER: Here in person.

 22 MS. SANDERS: Okay.

 23 Pat McGee.

 24 MS. MCGEE: Here in person.

 25 MS. SANDERS: Very good.

 5

 1 Jeff Milhelich.

 2 MR. MILHELICH: Here in person.

 3 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Corbb O'Connor.

 4 MR. O'CONNOR: Here.

 5 MS. SANDERS: And Jennifer Points.

 6 (No response.)

 7 MS. SANDERS: Do we have Jennifer?

 8 Apparently not.

 9 Justin Salisbury.

 10 (No response.)

 11 MS. SANDERS: We don't have Justin

 12 Salisbury.

 13 Okay. Ryan Strunk.

 14 (No response.)

 15 MS. SANDERS: I thought --

 16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We can't hear

 17 him.

 18 MS. SANDERS: Okay. What about

 19 Justin, is he on?

 20 So Ryan Strunk, if you are trying to

 21 talk to us we're not hearing you. Can you unmute?

 22 MR. STRUNK: Yes, I am here.

 23 MS. SANDERS: Okay.

 24 MR. STRUNK: I wondered did I sound

 25 like Justin a moment ago?

 6

 1 MS. SANDERS: Neither one of you

 2 answered. But Justin really isn't here and you

 3 are.

 4 And we know that Patrick is not here

 5 because he is bringing our food. So there we go.

 6 Okay. Well, I'm glad that so many

 7 people are here in person, it's going to make our

 8 picture look so lovely later and so we will be very

 9 flexible today.

 10 Everybody should have received minutes

 11 in their packet and so I would like a motion for

 12 someone to approve the reading of the minutes.

 13 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, so

 14 approved -- moved, so moved.

 15 MS. SANDERS: So moved. Okay, is

 16 there a second?

 17 MS. MCGEE: Pat McGee, second.

 18 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Rob moved and Pat

 19 McGee seconded that we approve the minutes. So we

 20 will go through the roll, here we go everyone. If

 21 I don't call your name because I think you're not

 22 here, let me know.

 23 Sue Fager.

 24 MS. FAGER: Approve.

 25 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Sam Flax.

 7

 1 MS. FLAX: Yes.

 2 MS. SANDERS: Hannah Harriman.

 3 MS. HARRIMAN: Yes.

 4 MS. SANDERS: Ryan Haenze.

 5 MR. HAENZE: Yes.

 6 MS. SANDERS: Tom Heinl.

 7 MR. HEINL: Yes.

 8 MS. SANDERS: Thea Kramer.

 9 MS. KRAMER: Yes.

 10 MS. SANDERS: Pat McGee.

 11 MS. MCGEE: Yes.

 12 MS. SANDERS: Jeff Milhelich.

 13 MR. MILHELICH: Yes.

 14 MS. SANDERS: Corbb O'Connor.

 15 MR. KOSHMRL: Yes.

 16 MS. SANDERS: Ryan Strunk.

 17 MR. STRUNK: Yes.

 18 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Thank you, the

 19 minutes are approved.

 20 MR. O'CONNOR: Judy, you need to vote.

 21 MS. SANDERS: Oh, Judy Sanders, I have

 22 to vote, thank you. I keep forgetting that I have

 23 to vote so I vote yes as well.

 24 All right. Now I think we should do

 25 introductions. We introduced everybody, we called

 8

 1 the roll so we know who is here, let's find out who

 2 else is with us. Let's start with the people in

 3 the room. If you are not on the Council I would

 4 like you to each introduce yourselves and I don't

 5 know where you want to start, but somebody be

 6 clever and figure that out.

 7 MS. JERDE: I can start. Technically

 8 I'm ex-officio on the Council, but this is Natasha

 9 Jerde.

 10 COURT REPORTER: Kim Evavold, court

 11 reporter.

 12 MS. SANDERS: And then we probably

 13 need to go to the audience part.

 14 MS. VANG: Nyia Vang.

 15 MS. SANDERS: Oh, okay.

 16 Jennifer Dunnam. Steve Jacobson.

 17 Dave Andrews. Dacia VanAlstine. Rocky Hart.

 18 MS. SANDERS: Anybody else?

 19 MR. O'CONNOR: Silas, do you want to

 20 introduce yourself over in the corner? Silas

 21 O'Connor is here.

 22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Silas has

 23 headphones on.

 24 MS. SANDERS: Oh, okay. It's not like

 25 him to not introduce himself, so I'm glad to know

 9

 1 there's a reason for that.

 2 All right. Then let's see where we

 3 will go from here. The minutes we approved, by the

 4 way, were the August 1 minutes, in case you want to

 5 know what we just approved.

 6 Okay. So one of the things that I

 7 want to report on, actually remind people of is

 8 that we need committee reports for the Annual

 9 Report. And the deadline for them is October 15,

 10 so it might be helpful -- I know some of them are

 11 done. When we get to committee reports if you

 12 can -- if you were the past committee chair you are

 13 the one who is responsible for the report. But if

 14 you are a current committee chair you may have a

 15 report that you want to give and that's fine. But

 16 I would like to get some idea of how many reports

 17 are still outstanding. It's okay if they are

 18 because you do have until the 15th, but I want to

 19 make sure they are not forgotten.

 20 Also, I think that we have two of us

 21 going to NCSAB. Actually one person, Justin, is

 22 going to go to the, what do they call that thing,

 23 it's the Councils that meet.

 24 MS. JERDE: NCSRC.

 25 MS. SANDERS: NCSRC, okay, you got to

 10

 1 love all these initials that are around. And I am

 2 going to NCSAB, which is the other end of the week,

 3 and then lots of SSB staff are going to the whole

 4 thing or at least they are covering the middle part

 5 for us which is CSAVR.

 6 And we will report back in two months

 7 about what we did and what we learned. And we

 8 have, you know, hopefully become that much wiser

 9 when we come back.

 10 We have Council vacancies that are

 11 going to occur and that's coming up in January.

 12 And you know, I thought I had a list.

 13 MS. O'CONNOR: O'Connor.

 14 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Briley.

 15 MS. O'CONNOR: Are we doing Zoom

 16 introductions or did I miss it?

 17 MS. SANDERS: Oh, yes, thank you. I

 18 need a keeper.

 19 MS. O'CONNOR: It's okay.

 20 MS. SANDERS: All right. So we know

 21 Briley O'Connor is on Zoom, who else would like to

 22 introduce themselves on Zoom who is not a member of

 23 the Council?

 24 MR. SAWCZYN: This is Steve Sawczyn.

 25 MS. SANDERS: Oh hi, Steve.

 11

 1 Okay. Anybody else?

 2 MS. ROGERS: Lisa Rogers.

 3 MS. SANDERS: Lisa, good to have you.

 4 MS. BEILKE: Jennifer Beilke.

 5 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Jennifer and then

 6 there was someone else?

 7 MS. HOLEMAN: Brianna Holeman.

 8 MS. SANDERS: Oh, okay, thank you,

 9 Brianna.

 10 MR. BENSON: Jon Benson.

 11 MS. SANDERS: Jon.

 12 Anybody else?

 13 (No response.)

 14 MS. SANDERS: Thank you, Briley. I

 15 appreciate having keepers.

 16 Okay. Now where was I? Oh, okay. So

 17 we are going to have vacancies and I thought I had

 18 a list but I didn't bring it. Nyia, do you happen

 19 to know?

 20 MS. VANG: Yes, I do. Do you want me

 21 to read off the names?

 22 MS. SANDERS: Yes, do you want to do

 23 it at a microphone?

 24 MS. VANG: Yes.

 25 Okay. So we have Hannah Harriman,

 12

 1 Ryan Haenze, Ryan Strunk, Judy Sanders, Rob Hobson.

 2 The term ends on January 6, 2025. And then for

 3 Patrick the term ends on January 20, 2025.

 4 MS. SANDERS: That's weird.

 5 Okay. Now, one of the things that it

 6 might help us to know is who is finishing their

 7 first -- which ones are first termers and which

 8 ones are ending their second term? Because those

 9 of you who are first termers have to decide whether

 10 you are applying for a new term and hopefully

 11 you've already done that, but you need to do it if

 12 you want to remain on the Council.

 13 So maybe if you can tell us who are

 14 the first termers, do you have that information,

 15 Nyia?

 16 MS. VANG: I believe Susan said

 17 everyone is eligible to apply except for Judy and I

 18 think it's one of the Ryans.

 19 MS. SANDERS: It's Ryan Strunk.

 20 So the rest of you are all first

 21 termers and you can reapply. And you need to do it

 22 through the Secretary of State's office. And if

 23 you need help to know what to do, you did it to get

 24 on the first time so maybe you don't need help, but

 25 you can -- if you need information about how to do

 13

 1 it or something talk to Nyia and since it's

 2 probably as new to her as it will be to you, she

 3 will find a way to figure it out because she is a

 4 resourceful person.

 5 MS. VANG: Thank you. Yeah, we can

 6 connect on it for the ones where their term ends

 7 and if they want to reapply I can help them with

 8 that.

 9 MS. SANDERS: Yes.

 10 Okay. Any questions about the terms?

 11 MR. O'CONNOR: O'Connor.

 12 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Corbb.

 13 MR. O'CONNOR: Is it the case that the

 14 next set of vacancies won't be until 2026, Nyia?

 15 MS. SANDERS: Oh, you mean will

 16 anybody's expire in 2025?

 17 MR. O'CONNOR: Correct.

 18 MS. SANDERS: You may not know that.

 19 MS. VANG: I don't know that.

 20 MR. O'CONNOR: No problem, we can

 21 look.

 22 MS. SANDERS: Yeah, I don't think it's

 23 necessarily even numbers, if that's what you are

 24 wondering.

 25 Now, one of the things that I guess I

 14

 1 don't know what we should do about this because my

 2 term is going to end in January so we need to --

 3 and that means for the February term there will

 4 have to be elections for Council chair and I

 5 assume, you know, everybody actually has to -- and

 6 a vice chair as well.

 7 So start thinking about that. And if

 8 any of you have any interest in taking over this,

 9 let us know and we can, you know, we will start a

 10 campaign or we'll draft you or have a coup or

 11 something.

 12 MR. HOBSON: A coup.

 13 MS. SANDERS: Yes.

 14 Okay. Now, we have to appoint a task

 15 force and it's for the Work Plan. Now, I'm going

 16 to explain a little bit about what the Work Plan

 17 does, it's kind of sufficient, but it's a month by

 18 month list of things that the Council is supposed

 19 to do and it's really a very handy thing to have

 20 because it keeps us on schedule, but we have to

 21 review it.

 22 So we need a task force and it only

 23 takes two or three people to do it. And all you

 24 have to do, you can meet on Zoom and you will be

 25 given a copy of the current Work Plan and you can

 15

 1 go through it and see if you think there needs to

 2 be changes in it or should we keep doing the same

 3 thing next year that we did this year? So we need

 4 people who are willing to just look at it and

 5 discuss it together and see if there need to be any

 6 changes.

 7 So would anyone like to volunteer for

 8 that? Don't all jump at once. And I guess, you

 9 know, we have a rule that our committees are open

 10 to anybody who wants to -- I mean, you have to be

 11 appointed, but so I'm thinking that since we are

 12 not having an overwhelming response that

 13 noncouncilmembers could volunteer for these task

 14 forces as well, I think.

 15 MR. HAENZE: This is Ryan.

 16 MS. O'CONNOR: Briley.

 17 MR. HAENZE: I am happy to be a part

 18 of it.

 19 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you, Ryan.

 20 Briley, are you --

 21 MS. O'CONNOR: I was also going to

 22 volunteer.

 23 MS. SANDERS: That's okay, I don't see

 24 that as a problem.

 25 MS. O'CONNOR: Okay, great.

 16

 1 Can we get one more person?

 2 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, I will do it.

 3 MS. SANDERS: Okay. The three of you

 4 can do it, Rob, Briley and Ryan. And Ryan, if you

 5 are willing to chair it/to coordinate it, that

 6 would be official. And let me know when you are

 7 meeting and if I am available I will join you as

 8 well.

 9 MR. HAENZE: That sounds great.

 10 MS. SANDERS: Okay. And I don't -- I

 11 would assume we have to have it by the December

 12 meeting, I don't remember what our current Work

 13 Plan says, but you will probably be able to figure

 14 that out when you actually read the thing. We'll

 15 make sure that there is a plan or that you have a

 16 copy of it.

 17 Okay. Now, I think Dacia we are going

 18 to introduce you next. Or does anybody have any

 19 other questions of me before we move on, of

 20 anything that we talked about or we didn't talk

 21 about?

 22 MR. STRUNK: Strunk.

 23 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Ryan.

 24 MR. STRUNK: Do we need to vote on the

 25 task force?

 17

 1 MS. SANDERS: Of course we do.

 2 MS. JERDE: It's because we haven't

 3 eaten, Judy.

 4 MS. SANDERS: That's a good excuse,

 5 even though I do that all the time. It's because

 6 we haven't eaten yet.

 7 All right. So I'm going to call the

 8 roll and you are voting for a task force that will

 9 include Ryan Strunk as chair, with Briley O'Connor

 10 and Rob Hobson as assistants.

 11 Sue.

 12 MS. FAGER: Yes.

 13 MS. SANDERS: Sam.

 14 MS. FLAX: Yes.

 15 MS. SANDERS: Hannah.

 16 MS. HARRIMAN: Yes.

 17 MS. SANDERS: Ryan H.

 18 MR. HAENZE: Yes.

 19 MS. SANDERS: Tom.

 20 MR. HEINL: Yes.

 21 MS. SANDERS: Thea.

 22 MS. KRAMER: Yes.

 23 MS. SANDERS: Pat.

 24 MS. MCGEE: Yes.

 25 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb, yes.

 18

 1 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Jeff Milhelich.

 2 MR. MILHELICH: Yes.

 3 MS. SANDERS: Ryan Strunk.

 4 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk, yes.

 5 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you. Judy,

 6 I vote yes, we have a task force.

 7 Okay. Now you will remember that last

 8 month we learned about new job opportunities

 9 opening up for Blind people and they are working

 10 through pharmacies. And we are going to learn more

 11 about that because it's brand new. And we have

 12 Dacia VanAlstine and she heads SSB's recruiting --

 13 well, you can tell us exactly what you do with it

 14 and anything else you do too, if you want to.

 15 So we will turn is over to Dacia. And

 16 if you want to come to the table.

 17 MS. VANALSTINE: I feel so honored I'm

 18 at the table.

 19 MS. SANDERS: She's at the table.

 20 MS. VANALSTINE: In that moment that

 21 you become older and you are no longer spending

 22 Thanksgiving at the kids' table and then all of a

 23 sudden you get to eat with the adults, that's kind

 24 of how I feel right now.

 25 Okay. So I will start kind of at the

 19

 1 beginning on how this happened and then I will move

 2 into kind of what we did and then where we are at

 3 right now and what we are looking at for the

 4 future.

 5 So I know that most of you are

 6 familiar with CSAVR. And CSAVR has an offshoot

 7 which is called the National Employment Team. And

 8 every agency, whether it's a general agency,

 9 combined agency or Blind agency, has a point of

 10 contact that is on this National Employment Team.

 11 And the purpose of it is so that we can seamlessly

 12 move employers that have a multi state footprint

 13 from state to state throughout the VR process.

 14 So if we are working with a company

 15 which, say, we were working with REO Equipment and

 16 they have other branches in other states, so we

 17 pulled in the net contacts from those states, so

 18 now they are working with that particular company.

 19 So it's a way for companies to be able to access VR

 20 throughout the country.

 21 So one of the programs or one of the

 22 companies that many states work with is CVS. CVS

 23 has a program to bring people into their stores,

 24 just kind of as a store associate, they get

 25 mentored in, things like that. That's something

 20

 1 that we've never really gotten people into in

 2 Minnesota. They post these positions, but they

 3 never have them in Minnesota.

 4 So we had a conversation with them

 5 and, you know, they had come back to Minnesota and

 6 said hey, you know, we want to really build our

 7 relationship with Minnesota again because we've had

 8 a standing relationship with them for many, many

 9 years. And we had said, you know, the thing is you

 10 don't have the positions in Minnesota.

 11 And so we got to talking and we were

 12 like what do you need in Minnesota? And they said

 13 oh, my gosh, we need pharmacy techs. Like we need

 14 pharmacy techs like crazy, everybody needs pharmacy

 15 techs in Minnesota and Minnesota is always super

 16 short on them.

 17 And so what we did was we worked with

 18 a company that was working with a couple of the New

 19 England states with their VR programs and they had

 20 come up with like a pharmacy tech training program.

 21 And so we brought that to Minnesota.

 22 We involved the pharmacy board to make sure that,

 23 you know, the students that went through this

 24 program were going to be able to meet the license

 25 requirements for Minnesota. And then we just

 21

 1 developed a program from there with this external

 2 company that would train people. And historically

 3 SSB has sent people to, like, Rasmussen and stuff

 4 to get them into the pharmacy tech roles, but once

 5 they get to the point where they are doing an

 6 internship or in the store, that's when everything

 7 falls apart and they fail.

 8 We have never been able to close

 9 somebody in that particular role. And part of that

 10 is because we can't get in their legally to do

 11 accommodations. We've tried to build relationships

 12 but really the schools hold onto those business

 13 relationships. And so we are not able to get in

 14 there and do anything and so people just haven't

 15 been able to succeed.

 16 Well, because we have the relationship

 17 with CVS they actually -- there is a lot more

 18 conversation that's able to happen, a lot more talk

 19 about accommodations, a lot more stuff just really

 20 on the front end of things.

 21 So as people are going through the

 22 training program that's one of the things that we

 23 address like immediately. So that's kind of how we

 24 ended up building this program.

 25 And what we did was it obviously was

 22

 1 open to the general agency and to SSB participants

 2 and we -- let me pull up my computer -- we

 3 developed and worked with CVS to find out what do

 4 you need, like what do you have to have, that kind

 5 of thing, and we came up with like a screening

 6 questionnaire that we worked with the individuals

 7 that were interested in and they were minimum

 8 qualifications, they are pretty basic.

 9 I will kind of go through a little bit

 10 of the questionnaire for you guys. They have to be

 11 18 or older, they have to have a high school

 12 diploma or a GED and they have to produce

 13 documentation of that. They have to be able to

 14 pass a drug test, including THC, they have to pass

 15 a background check, they can't have a history of

 16 substance abuse, they have to be willing to work in

 17 a retail environment.

 18 And then for the class, because we do

 19 the class virtually, they have to have a computer

 20 and internet access. So we were able to kind of

 21 work all that out ahead of time.

 22 When it comes to this first cohort,

 23 our pilot cohort that we did on this there were

 24 only two people in the Metro, everyone else was

 25 from greater Minnesota which, you know, whenever

 23

 1 things are developed it tends to be very

 2 metrocentric in Minnesota and this -- we had people

 3 from everywhere in this program.

 4 We did come up with some required

 5 skills that they have to have basic computer

 6 skills, they have to be able to communicate over

 7 email, phone and in person, they have to be able to

 8 have customer service skills, they have to have

 9 attention to detail, they have to be able to

 10 maintain focus, have basic mathematical reasoning,

 11 problem solving skills and be able to learn in a

 12 virtual environment.

 13 And then where we kind of worked with

 14 people on the physical requirements, and this is

 15 where a lot of the accommodations came into play,

 16 were they have to be able to -- remember this is

 17 with -- this could be with accommodations, so the

 18 ability to stand for long periods, but there can be

 19 accommodations for that. They have to be able to

 20 navigate in between work areas, have fine motor

 21 skills, be able to reach, bend and stoop. They

 22 have to be able to communicate, they have to be

 23 able to count, visually count, identify and

 24 distinguish color with accommodations, lift

 25 30 pounds and be able to stand for long periods of

 24

 1 time. I just realized that we have that twice in

 2 our questionnaire and nobody ever brought it up.

 3 And then we give them the opportunity

 4 to give us more information about accommodations

 5 and then the top three locations that they are

 6 interested in working in.

 7 And so then we meet with them

 8 individually and we kind of talk about their

 9 requirements and like what accommodations they

 10 might need. And then we work with them and their

 11 counselor to make sure that stuff is taken care of

 12 ahead of time.

 13 And then during the class, because we

 14 have such a close relationship with CVS, we can

 15 work out things. So there were people -- there

 16 were SSB customers that needed accommodations, you

 17 know, all of a sudden mid class something came up

 18 that they couldn't do, but we were able to just

 19 like work through it.

 20 So that's kind of how we started. We

 21 started with nine individuals, three SSB

 22 individuals, six from the general agency. As of

 23 right now seven of the nine are working. One of

 24 the two that's not working is because of the area

 25 that they live in, there was only one open position

 25

 1 and they are from the general agency and they were

 2 competing with someone from SSB and the SSB person

 3 got it. Sorry/not sorry.

 4 And then another one was working but

 5 decided it wasn't for her and so she is no longer

 6 working, but otherwise seven of the nine are

 7 employed. So any questions so far that anybody

 8 has? I know I am kind of moving this quickly, but

 9 I don't have to.

 10 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb.

 11 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

 12 MR. O'CONNOR: So one question, and

 13 I'm excited, this is a question that applies to

 14 what you have just been describing and your broader

 15 employment experience.

 16 With minimum qualifications and

 17 requirements like stoop or bend or visually

 18 identify color, you mentioned like with

 19 accommodations, which makes perfect sense, but I've

 20 always wondered why are the descriptions written

 21 that way instead of a more universal language that

 22 says, you know, be able to retrieve an item from a

 23 lower shelf rather than like well, yes, I guess if

 24 you're able bodied you'd stoop and you would lift.

 25 And it's like yeah, but if not everyone can do that

 26

 1 or not everyone can visually discern color, but we

 2 have other ways to do it, why do we see that in job

 3 descriptions?

 4 MS. VANALSTINE: And that is something

 5 that we will continuously forever be training and

 6 retraining and retraining and retraining companies

 7 on. That is a conversation and it's the same thing

 8 with driver's licenses, you don't need a driver's

 9 license for most of the jobs out there, you need to

 10 be able to get from Point A to Point B and, you

 11 know, you don't need a driver's license to do that.

 12 So I don't have an answer why we see

 13 that all the time, but I do know that it is

 14 something that every VR agency and their business

 15 services are constantly working with employers on

 16 and working with employers on we call it inclusive

 17 job descriptions and inclusive requisitions because

 18 it is very limiting on that.

 19 Because yes, you were right, you don't

 20 necessarily have to stoop and bend and lift, you

 21 have to be able to retrieve. And those are the

 22 same, but different.

 23 MR. O'CONNOR: Got it. So these were

 24 CVS's language, not SSB's language?

 25 MS. VANALSTINE: Correct.

 27

 1 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay, that's helpful.

 2 Thank you.

 3 MS. O'CONNOR: Briley.

 4 MS. FLAX: Sam.

 5 MS. SANDERS: Sam.

 6 MS. FLAX: I think Briley was first

 7 though.

 8 MS. SANDERS: Okay, Briley.

 9 MS. O'CONNOR: I'll take it. I'm

 10 curious as to what the accommodation would be just

 11 for being able to differentiate color for pills

 12 specifically? I know there are color identifiers

 13 and things like that, but how are people doing that

 14 now in a way that would be deemed as an efficient

 15 time?

 16 MS. VANALSTINE: So in order to do

 17 this program you have to start, and I mean start,

 18 you don't have to end with it, but you have to

 19 start with some vision. And when I say you have to

 20 start it's because there is no way to completely,

 21 if you don't have any vision, be able to

 22 accommodate that. Even with a color identifier

 23 because of how crucial it is to get it right.

 24 So when individuals start this they

 25 have to be able to have some sort of accommodation

 28

 1 and a lot of what we are using are things like

 2 CCTVs, those can be a thing, or even the glasses,

 3 the goggles, those can work too. When I say that

 4 you don't have to end with vision it's because once

 5 you get your time in a store and you get through

 6 that 240 hours to get your license, you only need

 7 to continue with your CEUs which don't necessarily

 8 have to be in person.

 9 And there are a lot of jobs, once you

 10 get that initial license, that are ones that are

 11 virtual, so working from home or working in the

 12 background in hospitals, things like that. Doing

 13 things like you are a pharmacy tech and you have to

 14 be a pharmacy tech to do this, but it's getting

 15 prior authorizations, it's ordering. It is

 16 anything that's in the background and not dealing

 17 with the actual pills. There are a lot of jobs

 18 that are like that and you actually don't have to

 19 have vision to do those jobs.

 20 So if you have a visual condition and

 21 if you have enough vision to get through the

 22 program and get your 240 hours in and then get your

 23 license and then you lose your vision, that doesn't

 24 mean your career is over.

 25 MS. O'CONNOR: Quick follow-up to that

 29

 1 real quick, I know Sam is next, but just as a quick

 2 thing: So is there any movement to innovate and

 3 problem solve with this in terms of the program?

 4 So like using something like Meta Glasses to be

 5 able to distinguish those so we are not, you know,

 6 I know you got to start somewhere, right, makes

 7 sense to me. But what's being done in that area to

 8 try to make this program accessible for people who

 9 don't have that much residual vision?

 10 MS. VANALSTINE: We're not there yet.

 11 So right now we are working through kind of the

 12 main points and stuff that we've had so far and

 13 once we work through some of that, then we can

 14 start looking at other stuff.

 15 And I know that you can't fully get

 16 through, like they can't depend on things that are

 17 like AI or anything like that to do this, it has to

 18 be a person, and the reason why is just because

 19 they just need a human to make sure that the right

 20 pills are going to the right person.

 21 So that is something that we will be

 22 exploring. And this, with being our first cohort,

 23 we are at where we are at. So it wasn't a perfect

 24 answer, but we are at where we are at for now.

 25 MS. SANDERS: Sam.

 30

 1 MS. FLAX: Yeah. So I guess based on

 2 that I have a few questions first. Is there plans

 3 for a second cohort and if so, when are people able

 4 to apply for that?

 5 MS. VANALSTINE: There are absolutely

 6 plans for a second cohort. We are meeting with the

 7 training company on Monday. VRS and myself, we are

 8 meeting with them to talk about what we are going

 9 to do for the next cohort. We are also going to

 10 talk to them outside, we are not having CVS there,

 11 and the reason why is because now anybody that

 12 wants to do this, once they get their license they

 13 can really go anywhere, they are not, you know,

 14 married to working for CVS. And we have also found

 15 that specifically in the one particular area where

 16 there were two people and only one CVS with only

 17 one opening, there was also a Wal-Mart and a

 18 Walgreens in that area and a Coborn's.

 19 We haven't met with Walgreens yet. We

 20 have met with the pharmacy recruiters and the

 21 pharmacy people that are in charge with both

 22 Coborn's and Wal-Mart, and they are both on board.

 23 And out of those seven people that are working, two

 24 of them are working at Wal-Marts now, so only five

 25 people out of the nine are working at CVS.

 31

 1 So Walmart was super excited about

 2 this, I mean, really to them it is a very small

 3 investment on SSB's part. I mean, we spend money

 4 on lots of things and lots of training and

 5 whatever, this is less than $3,000 and we are

 6 investing in someone's -- in human capital at this

 7 point, right, we are investing in the person.

 8 And because we are doing that it's

 9 actually short cutting some of the training they

 10 have to do with Wal-Mart and with CVS and Coborn's

 11 and it's making them way more competitive for these

 12 positions too. I mean, they are coming in with

 13 stuff that a lot of other candidates have. And to

 14 top that off, whoever hires them is not married to

 15 Rasmussen or whatever educational program that is,

 16 they don't have to work with them too, they are

 17 really able to work with the candidates.

 18 MS. FLAX: Okay. So my recommendation

 19 would be that because the next cohort hasn't been

 20 started yet that there should not be another cohort

 21 until all SSB participants are able to apply.

 22 As someone who is totally Blind

 23 myself, I can no longer see color, I am planning to

 24 apply to nursing school, I've a goal of becoming a

 25 midwife, and I'm sharing that publicly, but one of

 32

 1 the things I thought about doing in the preparation

 2 while I'm in nursing school is doing this program.

 3 And now I'm being told that I would be

 4 discriminated against, I would not be able to do

 5 this program when I can think of six ways off the

 6 top of my head that goes against the idea that

 7 people are able to do this job with accommodation.

 8 So I would strongly suggest that if SSB is going to

 9 run a program, that program should be accessible to

 10 all SSB customers.

 11 MS. VANALSTINE: And we certainly can

 12 explore different ways for us to be able to

 13 accommodate that and if you have ideas on how we

 14 can accommodate that, you know, I am absolutely

 15 willing to have a conversation with you because I

 16 want this to succeed and I want this to be

 17 something that anybody can apply for and that

 18 anybody can do.

 19 Because this is a career path that can

 20 lead to a really good -- I mean, it's a path, it's

 21 not a retail job where you just go and you work in

 22 a store, it's a path to much bigger and better

 23 things and at good wages. And it's something

 24 that's -- the labor market is always going to be

 25 needed, everything in pharmacy is always going to

 33

 1 be needed, so it is a career path. And so if we

 2 can find ways to make that happen I am absolutely

 3 willing to have conversations with anybody that

 4 wants to have conversations with me about it.

 5 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Anymore

 6 questions?

 7 I want to comment a little bit in

 8 addition to what Sam says. You know, it's easy for

 9 us to say I know that everybody at SSB should be

 10 willing or able to apply, but the problem then

 11 comes we wouldn't get hired. I mean, we can't tell

 12 CVS that until we can convince them that there is a

 13 way for us to make it work. So if we have the

 14 specific answers, and you can't have all the

 15 answers. I remember when I was going to be a

 16 teacher and they said how would you know when a

 17 student or someone can't breathe? And I said well,

 18 they will probably fall out of their chair.

 19 Anyway, we should aim for that, but to

 20 say that we wouldn't let anyone apply until that

 21 can happen, I'm not sure we want to do that. So we

 22 should explore it and look specifically at what is

 23 it about having to know the color, that's one way

 24 for people to identify things, but is it really the

 25 only way, because it probably isn't, and pursue it

 34

 1 with them.

 2 And I think that happens, you know,

 3 sometimes when we deal with CSAVR they don't think

 4 about the blindness part, that's not their thing,

 5 so we got to do that.

 6 Any last questions or any last

 7 comments that you want to make, Dacia?

 8 MS. VANALSTINE: As far as, you know,

 9 they don't always think about the vision piece and

 10 I'm super tenacious so I'm always in their faces.

 11 MS. SANDERS: Good for you.

 12 MS. VANALSTINE: I am, but it is

 13 something that, yeah, not just them, it's not

 14 often, you know, when you look at disability,

 15 vision isn't always the one that people think of.

 16 MS. SANDERS: Exactly.

 17 MS. VANALSTINE: You know, they think

 18 of somebody in a wheelchair or they think of, you

 19 know, maybe autism or something like that. They

 20 don't think of the vision piece.

 21 So I will say I am pretty much always

 22 in people's faces, I am pretty tenacious, but I am

 23 also very willing to have those conversations. So

 24 if anybody has any ideas or wants to help me

 25 explore this, I am absolutely on board with that.

 35

 1 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb.

 2 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

 3 MR. O'CONNOR: So what I am hearing, I

 4 think, is the idea of making sure that when we run

 5 the program for a second cohort, just making sure

 6 that we don't self select by saying hey, you need

 7 to be able to identify color, right, but then we

 8 say hey, who is interested in the caseload?

 9 And for sure as you talked about,

 10 right, we go through the screening questions and

 11 then we just make sure to have conversation with

 12 those questions which sounds like is your

 13 intention. And then we say okay, we were thinking

 14 you would need to identify color, here is the jobs

 15 that will need to be done, here is the assessment

 16 we will require, what are ways we can do that that

 17 still would get you that same result? And then we

 18 can talk to the Pharmacy Board.

 19 And I think there are advocacy

 20 organizations that would be glad to partner with

 21 you, the National Federation of the Blind included,

 22 to go -- if we need to change the licensing

 23 requirements and the exams, we can do that, it's

 24 just a matter of how we do that, with your

 25 expertise from having done this with one cohort,

 36

 1 with folks with different acuities.

 2 MS. VANALSTINE: And in the stores the

 3 Pharmacy Board isn't going to, because they don't

 4 care how someone gets their 240 hours in, it's

 5 going to be the individual pharmacies and stores

 6 and then how we can get someone to let us try

 7 that's going to be still a sticking point.

 8 MS. SANDERS: Yep.

 9 MS. VANALSTINE: I do know working

 10 with the -- and that's a conversation that we will

 11 be having too with the training program on, you

 12 know, how are some things that we could -- how are

 13 some ways that we can work around some of this?

 14 Because it's not even just someone with a vision

 15 impairment, you know, we are also talking about

 16 color blindness. And there are other things too.

 17 And as of right now there's -- the stores have not

 18 figured out a feasible way for someone to do that,

 19 but that doesn't mean there isn't one. And we can

 20 work towards that.

 21 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Thank you very

 22 much for the time you've taken and we will stay in

 23 touch and think more about all these solutions.

 24 MS. VANALSTINE: If you need my

 25 contact information, somebody has got it.

 37

 1 MS. SANDERS: I think Nyia probably

 2 has it and so we can get in touch. And you can

 3 stay in touch with us too because, you know, you

 4 will think of new things and want us to know and

 5 you can come back any time.

 6 MS. VANALSTINE: Thank you for having

 7 me.

 8 MS. SANDERS: And you are welcome to

 9 stay and have food. So I don't know about anybody

 10 else, but I think there is food here.

 11 MS. JERDE: There is.

 12 MS. SANDERS: So what I would propose,

 13 unless somebody who knows more about the food has

 14 an idea what you want to do, figure what you want

 15 us to do to get the food, we will take a break

 16 while we do that, but when you have gotten your

 17 plate and when we have all gotten our plates we

 18 will meet while we eat.

 19 And then we will take another break

 20 for the picture separate from that. Because we are

 21 not at our break time yet, we had another item, you

 22 know, before the break. But I say we get food

 23 first.

 24 (Break taken from 6:27 to 6:44 p.m.)

 25 MS. SANDERS: On the agenda we are now

 38

 1 ready to talk about the committee that's taking

 2 care of all the goals and priorities and all of

 3 that stuff, but do we know who is presenting that?

 4 Is that you, Corbb, or is it Jennifer?

 5 MR. O'CONNOR: It's Corbb as soon as I

 6 find the microphone switch.

 7 MS. SANDERS: Oh okay, good.

 8 MR. O'CONNOR: So there's not much of

 9 a report for the Customer Satisfaction Goals and

 10 Priorities Committee at this point. What we are

 11 waiting for is the Customer Satisfaction data to

 12 come back, so anybody who has a customer

 13 satisfaction survey link please go take.

 14 And then the goals and priorities we

 15 are awaiting the SSB staff takes a first crack at

 16 how well we have achieved these goals and

 17 priorities this year and then the committee can

 18 provide our input on that, that all becomes part of

 19 the Annual Report.

 20 What we could use in the next little

 21 while is as councilmembers or audience members have

 22 ideas about what the goals and priorities for the

 23 2025 year should be, we would love to take those

 24 ideas. So if there are things that you think we

 25 ought to be as an agency working on, it's a

 39

 1 streamline thing. If you have ideas send those off

 2 of to me and probably the easiest way to do that is

 3 to send them to the SRC-B email address that you

 4 got an invitation to this meeting from and then we

 5 will ask Nyia to forward those along just to keep

 6 things nice and simple for everybody.

 7 That's my very brief report that we

 8 have for the October meeting.

 9 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Usually those

 10 reports are being given, you know, when we do those

 11 at the end, but I thought that this was on the

 12 agenda for a particular reason.

 13 MR. O'CONNOR: This is a great point

 14 for Ryan and the Work Plan Committee to reconsider

 15 the timing of this part of the Work Plan. It's on

 16 the Work Plan for October, so you are correct,

 17 however, the data is never available by the October

 18 council meeting. So we can either adjust the

 19 Council schedule or we can move this. The

 20 downside, of course, is if we move it we are

 21 basically moving it to December when we are

 22 approving the Annual Report, so it's a difficult

 23 timing issue, but this happens every year.

 24 MS. SANDERS: All right.

 25 MR. O'CONNOR: And if I've gotten any

 40

 1 of that wrong, please, Jennifer, holler.

 2 MR. DUNLAP: Nope, every single year

 3 same thing.

 4 MS. SANDERS: So one of the things

 5 that I am asking each committee, of course, to

 6 report on about their committee assignments and if

 7 they are ready to do it and you have got a problem

 8 because you don't have the data to do it with?

 9 MR. O'CONNOR: That is correct. Lisa

 10 will be hearing from us in enough time to put it in

 11 the report for sure. And I think this has

 12 typically been a Jon Benson, I remember you've been

 13 involved with this quite a bit, but if there is

 14 particular staff liaison I should be aware of to

 15 get that satisfaction report data and the goals and

 16 priorities, please holler either now or follow-up

 17 after is fine.

 18 MS. ROGERS: Corbb, this is Lisa

 19 Rogers. I believe that I'm the one that will be

 20 heading that up, so we will be in touch.

 21 MR. O'CONNOR: Fabulous, thank you.

 22 MR. HOBSON: This is Rob.

 23 MS. SANDERS: Rob.

 24 MR. HOBSON: Can I make a suggestion?

 25 MR. O'CONNOR: Can you turn your mike

 41

 1 on?

 2 MR. HOBSON: Yeah, I'm looking for

 3 it. There it is.

 4 This is Rob. I think if we are

 5 running into this issue more and more, if I recall

 6 correctly, because I think I was part of the work

 7 group a couple years ago, at least it feels like a

 8 couple of years ago, where we started sending out

 9 the Customer Satisfaction Survey, I believe, in

 10 August. And then it takes awhile to get all the

 11 data compiled, so maybe it's something we should

 12 start doing earlier. And I guess it's more of a

 13 Natasha question because the Council can't really

 14 control that.

 15 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. I know

 16 that there's timing because we have to work with

 17 basically our partners down at the department

 18 because they do all of the survey work, but I know

 19 Lisa Rogers has taken over the Customer

 20 Satisfaction Survey and so that could be something

 21 she could investigate for the next go-around is can

 22 we do it in the summer or the spring versus the

 23 fall or the late summer. And so we can kind of be

 24 a little bit more proactive about it.

 25 MS. ROGERS: This is Lisa Rogers. I

 42

 1 will reach out to Devin at DEED and see if we can

 2 maybe get it on his schedule for earlier next year.

 3 This year was difficult because they had some

 4 position changes and then they had other things

 5 that were kind of cropping up, it was a scheduling

 6 matter, but yeah, I will work on that.

 7 MS. DUNNAM: Jennifer.

 8 MS. SANDERS: Jennifer.

 9 MS. DUNNAM: (Inaudible).

 10 MR. O'CONNOR: Jennifer said that the

 11 satisfaction survey data is the lower of the

 12 concerns, the bigger concern is the progress to

 13 date on the goals and priorities with SSB's staff's

 14 first input on that so that the group can react and

 15 provide insight afterward.

 16 So Lisa, I would say that would be

 17 helpful for you to follow up on, and I would also

 18 say Natasha, Jon and Brianna, maybe we can chat

 19 about what can be done, maybe, to bring some of the

 20 goals and priorities results data forward sooner as

 21 well.

 22 MS. JERDE: Absolutely.

 23 MS. SANDERS: All right. Before we

 24 proceed to anything else, I want everybody to be

 25 aware that this meal was provided by Pat Vellia and

 43

 1 his catering firm. And he is here and he is the

 2 one who brought all this food over here and I think

 3 we should give Pat a special thank you.

 4 (Clapping).

 5 MR. VELLIA: Thank you so much.

 6 MR. O'CONNOR: You have nine year old

 7 approval, that's pretty good.

 8 MS. SANDERS: That's right.

 9 MS. JERDE: We have 6:48, should I

 10 just start?

 11 MS. SANDERS: Now we do have to take a

 12 break but probably people, I know I am still

 13 eating, do you need to eat more before you start

 14 your report?

 15 MS. JERDE: Oh no, I'm good. I

 16 haven't eaten yet so I'm good.

 17 MS. SANDERS: Oh, dear.

 18 MS. JERDE: No, I'm okay. I can go

 19 and then we can take a break after mine or maybe in

 20 between.

 21 MS. SANDERS: Yeah, let's do that.

 22 Let's go on so everyone is still eating and then

 23 whenever we, you know, she can do her report and

 24 then we will either stop in the middle of it and do

 25 the picture or we'll do it when she is done.

 44

 1 MS. JERDE: Perfect. This is Natasha.

 2 I have a two parter. I have just a really quick

 3 highlight, high level of what is happening at SSB

 4 and then I am actually going to dive into our

 5 Disability Innovation Fund Grant overview.

 6 So first Happy National Disability

 7 Employment Awareness Month, it is NDEAM. And let

 8 me jump right in. So since the last council

 9 meeting Outreach has hosted vendor booths at seven

 10 conferences and resource fairs. We have

 11 interviewed two Radio Talking Book listeners, two

 12 senior services customers, presented at two eye

 13 clinics, helped coordinate the volunteer

 14 recognition dinner and are working on several

 15 projects including collaborating with MnDOT on

 16 accessibility of shared walking and bike paths.

 17 As you may have noticed, our

 18 cafeteria/rehab teaching space is coming along.

 19 We've had a few bumps in the road, but we are

 20 almost there, after this you can ask me about the

 21 oven issue.

 22 As I had mentioned before, Vocational

 23 Rehabilitation Services is moving a small group of

 24 staff into our admin side of the building. And by

 25 moving in I mean they have some space, they are not

 45

 1 really going to be here that much. They are

 2 scheduled to move in at the beginning of November.

 3 This move actually gives us a cost savings of

 4 $180,000 a year in facilities costs, because we

 5 base it on the number of staff they are assigning

 6 to our office. They are assigning 26 staff. We

 7 will probably only run across three or four at any

 8 given time, so a lot of money saved.

 9 VRS staff will then in November be

 10 receiving training from Char and Kia around just

 11 general etiquette, accessibility and just an

 12 introduction to what is Adjustment to Blindness

 13 training and so we have already started

 14 orchestrating that with the managers.

 15 The Business Enterprise Program hired

 16 a part-time bookkeeper to help Cara, her name is

 17 Jane Kelly. We also hired a full-time technician

 18 position, Keith Severson was hired for this

 19 position, he already worked for us so this was a

 20 promotional opportunity.

 21 And I have some pretty amazing news

 22 that is pretty much hot off the press as of

 23 yesterday. We finalized our agreement with MinnCOR

 24 Industries, this is the agreement that covers our

 25 BEP operations at state prisons. After decades we

 46

 1 have eliminated the commission requirement and

 2 replaced it instead with a much smaller fee expense

 3 where we are just reimbursing MinnCOR for actual

 4 administrative costs. This results in tens of

 5 thousands of dollars that are getting put back into

 6 each BEP's operators' pockets.

 7 What we were paying was almost like

 8 200,000 or so in commissions, we have dropped that

 9 down to $68,000 and it's purely what does it cost

 10 to process the invoices to create the tokens. And

 11 so that was huge news. Our operators are thrilled.

 12 Brent Benson joins our Senior Services

 13 team permanently. He was helping out but they

 14 stole him away from Workforce Development, he was a

 15 job coach. He will be serving southeast Minnesota.

 16 This is an area that was covered by Angela Christle

 17 who indicated she was probably not going to be

 18 returning after her leave.

 19 Our Aging Eyes program now has close

 20 to 600 partners and there is going to be a big

 21 upcoming training at Presbyterian Homes.

 22 In October the Twin Cities Eye

 23 Consultants will be visiting SSB to tour our new

 24 training area, our kitchen.

 25 And Amy McClellan, who served

 47

 1 northeast Minnesota, will be replacing Ed on the

 2 Statewide Independent Living Council.

 3 Some more exciting news. I have a

 4 little bit of data, I promise I will try not to

 5 make it boring. But you may know that we negotiate

 6 performance requirements with the Feds and we do

 7 that jointly with the general agency, with Voc

 8 Rehab. And we have a negotiated goal that if we

 9 don't meet it we could be sanctioned. Okay, so

 10 it's tough stuff.

 11 So we got our results back and they

 12 are actually incredible. We have exceeded every

 13 single negotiated goal. Employment rate six months

 14 after exit, meaning people who get closed out and

 15 are working and they keep that job or keep a job

 16 second quarter after they have been closed, we

 17 negotiated 52 percent of people and we actually got

 18 56.4 percent. For employment rate one year after

 19 exit we negotiated 50.1 percent and we are at

 20 55.7 percent.

 21 Median earnings. Now I will say SSB's

 22 median earnings are twice as high as what it ended

 23 up being, but our negotiated joint goal was a

 24 median earnings of $3,513 a month. Our actual is

 25 3,852. SSB, though, hovers around $7,500 a month

 48

 1 for median earnings. The people that are getting

 2 jobs, they make typically well above minimum wage.

 3 Our credential rate, the number of

 4 credentials folks are earning, are negotiated with

 5 33 percent and we are at 40.6 percent. Measurable

 6 skill gains, which SSB has struggled with to

 7 collect, our negotiated rate was 51.8 percent, we

 8 are at 57 percent.

 9 And SSB, we actually were kind of

 10 dragging the measurable skill rate number down

 11 because we could not get a handle on our data. Our

 12 measurable skill gain rate went up 20 percent. And

 13 the reason it did is because our quality assurance

 14 analyst, Ashland.

 15 We were actually at CSAVR and we are

 16 like we got to fix this. And so Ashland and a

 17 group of us were talking and she goes I'm just

 18 gonna do it, I'm gonna call people, I'm gonna track

 19 it down, I'm gonna look at every single case and we

 20 are going to get it and it went up 20 percent when

 21 she did that. So it's not a sustainable solution,

 22 but we are going to work on it.

 23 This Saturday we are hosting a student

 24 networking event. If any of you are going to be

 25 attending and volunteering, thank you.

 49

 1 Debbie Sengbusch, and you may know her

 2 as Debbie Mahulka, one of our VR techs, is retiring

 3 after 40 years at the State, her official day is

 4 tomorrow. Radio Talking Book is hiring a new

 5 intermittent broadcaster.

 6 And planned giving, the November give

 7 to the max day is coming up and we will be doing

 8 our marketing for that. So that's some quick hits.

 9 Pause for any questions.

 10 MR. HOBSON: I have a question.

 11 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb.

 12 MS. SANDERS: Rob.

 13 MR. HOBSON: So I don't know if you

 14 are aware of this, but I got an email this week

 15 that said VRS is over their 15 percent. And I know

 16 we share that 15 percent somehow, I don't recall

 17 how that works.

 18 MS. SANDERS: Wait, over 15 percent of

 19 what?

 20 MR. HOBSON: In Pre-ETS and they are

 21 at 27 percent. Will that impact our 15 percent?

 22 MS. JERDE: So this is Natasha. So a

 23 little background. We as a State have to expend at

 24 least 15 percent of our Federal funds on

 25 Pre-employment transition services. We look at it

 50

 1 separately, SSB, we manage our 15 percent, VRS

 2 manages theirs, but all the Feds care about is as a

 3 group you are doing it.

 4 So no, it doesn't impact us. We

 5 actually want to exceed 15 percent and we are. We

 6 are, I think, hovering around 17. The thing is,

 7 VRS is overspending, like they have -- yes, they

 8 are overspending so they are trying to curtail that

 9 and decreasing the amount of Pre-ETS to try to get

 10 their funding back in order. We are good, we don't

 11 have anything to worry about and we are going to

 12 continue as is for Pre-ETS.

 13 MR. HOBSON: That's awesome, thank

 14 you.

 15 MS. JERDE: You are welcome.

 16 MR. HART: Rocky Hart.

 17 MS. SANDERS: Rocky.

 18 MR. HART: A couple --

 19 MS. JERDE: Rocky, you just have to

 20 hit like the space bar right on your microphone.

 21 There you go.

 22 MR. HART: Okay. A couple of

 23 questions. First of all, I know that this was

 24 asked several months ago, but I figured I would

 25 raise the question again because in case people

 51

 1 have the same question.

 2 With VRS staff moving into some of the

 3 administrative location with SSB, is that just a

 4 location issue? I just want to make sure that

 5 there are no plans to combine the two agencies; is

 6 that correct?

 7 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha, oh heck

 8 no, no, no, definitely not, not on my watch. But

 9 the -- there is a career force location on Fairview

 10 and University and that's where the Voc Rehab staff

 11 resided. They are shutting down that entire career

 12 force location and all of the partners are moving

 13 to downtown St. Paul in Metro Square.

 14 And VRS said they do not want to be

 15 downtown, they don't want the location, the parking

 16 issues, all of that, so they were looking for space

 17 around here. And we are on a transportation line,

 18 we had some extra cubicles and an office free so we

 19 said yeah, come and check it out.

 20 MR. HART: Great. The second question

 21 I have for you is a couple months ago you had

 22 reported that there were some questions being

 23 raised by the Feds regarding the utility, if you

 24 will, of the Vocational Rehab program because

 25 several states had given back funds, Minnesota,

 52

 1 fortunately, is not one of them. But do you have

 2 any updates for us on that and is there anything

 3 that we need to do to ensure that we can keep VR

 4 intact.

 5 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. The

 6 really, really great news is not one state lost

 7 money, like not one state had to give their money

 8 back to the treasurer. All states that needed to

 9 give money back they put it back into the pot that

 10 then got redoled out to other VR programs.

 11 That is a very, very good sign that

 12 Congress is paying attention to that states are

 13 using their funds. And what we are hearing is that

 14 applications are going through the roof across the

 15 country. The VR program in my viewpoint is on the

 16 rise, I'm feeling more optimistic than I probably

 17 ever have.

 18 MR. HART: Thank you.

 19 MS. SANDERS: Any more questions

 20 before -- and you tell us when you want to break

 21 for the picture.

 22 MS. JERDE: Sure. I will leave it up

 23 to you, Judy. Do you want me to start talking

 24 about the Disability Innovation Fund or we break

 25 and then I just go to town on it?

 53

 1 MS. SANDERS: Yeah, go ahead,

 2 especially if people are still eating. Are people

 3 still eating?

 4 MS. JERDE: Yep, there are still some.

 5 I will have Nyia share the

 6 presentation which I will also walk through. So

 7 while she is doing that, as you may have read in

 8 the email, State Services for the Blind was one of

 9 27 agencies out of 200 to receive a Disability

 10 Innovation Fund Grant. We were also the only

 11 department to receive two of these grants. The

 12 Minnesota Retain program also received 10 million,

 13 so Minnesota is pretty special with this go-around.

 14 So I will start with just giving --

 15 (Clapping.)

 16 MS. JERDE: Oh, thank you. I will say

 17 there were a lot of tears creating this application

 18 and I told Jon Benson I will never do another one

 19 again and, in fact, I don't even know if you want

 20 the money because this was so complicated, but we

 21 are excited.

 22 All right. So first I want to give an

 23 overview about what is the Disability Innovation

 24 Fund and what are the rules.

 25 So every year Vocational

 54

 1 Rehabilitation agencies have a moment in time where

 2 they can give their unspent funds back to the Feds

 3 and the Feds can then give that money to other

 4 agencies who need it or they can create something

 5 called a Disability Innovation Fund. It's a grant

 6 program that allows for innovation.

 7 This year the -- every year they

 8 choose a different topic and not every year they

 9 have this DIF availability, but every year they

 10 choose a different topic. And this year the topic

 11 was really broad, it was 21st Century innovative

 12 approaches to getting competitive integrated

 13 employment outcomes.

 14 There was a big push for technology,

 15 there was a big push for serving individuals who

 16 acquire a disability later in life and there were

 17 other areas that they encouraged people to

 18 consider. It was highly competitive, over 200

 19 applicants.

 20 I will say I think only two of the

 21 winners of the award were Vocational Rehabilitation

 22 agencies, ourself and the Department of Maryland,

 23 the rest were all institutions of higher education,

 24 the American Printinghouse received one, the

 25 National Disability Institute did.

 55

 1 So this grant that we got we asked for

 2 around 9.1 million, we got 9.1 million. It is five

 3 years. We got the whole amount. We draw it down,

 4 but we got the whole amount for all five years. We

 5 were good starting 10/1 and this will go through

 6 September 30 of 2029. We have no match or

 7 maintenance of effort requirements.

 8 What this means is the State does not

 9 have to kick in any money for this. We don't have

 10 to beg, borrow and steal State funds from other

 11 programs, this is 100 percent Federal money and we

 12 don't have to do anything else.

 13 We have a little more flexibility with

 14 how we can use the funds. We still have some of

 15 the same, we call it uniform guidance where, you

 16 know, I can't use that money and throw a big party

 17 with it, of course. Those kinds of things still

 18 exist, but by flexibility I mean the people we are

 19 serving under this grant do not need to be

 20 affiliated with the VR program, they do not need to

 21 meet our eligibility requirements, they do not even

 22 need to write an application to be involved in our

 23 VR program.

 24 The whole point is to be as flexible

 25 as possible with serving the people you are serving

 56

 1 and, in fact, as I walk through this, the majority

 2 of people who will be served under this grant

 3 probably will never have an application under the

 4 VR program.

 5 So I will share this presentation out.

 6 If you want to read the grant application it is

 7 linked in here. It's 45 pages of a lot of text and

 8 a lot of research and all of that, but we partnered

 9 with the Institute for Community Inclusion out of

 10 UMass Boston, as well as Lanterna Consulting.

 11 And ICI is a research institute and

 12 the reason we chose them is because they are doing

 13 the DIF grant for the general agency, so they

 14 already have a contract in place with the State,

 15 they already have all of the research methodology

 16 and they are the easiest to get in and help with

 17 all of the research and the program evaluation.

 18 They are also involved with a lot of

 19 other State agencies including New Jersey's Agency

 20 for the Blind, I'm rolling out some models that we

 21 are going to be including.

 22 So I have an image, kind of a visual

 23 of really how we were thinking this would look.

 24 And what the visual is is two trees on kind of a

 25 foundation or grass. And in between the two trees

 57

 1 is an X with a heart in the middle. And tree one

 2 says career development and pathways, tree one is

 3 all about people, the people we are serving and in

 4 that tree are things like benefits planning, AI and

 5 advanced technology, adaptive training, work base

 6 learning.

 7 And the other tree is business

 8 engagement and it's all about the business, the

 9 employer. And in there is digital accessability

 10 support, accommodation implementation, retention.

 11 And in the foundation in the grass it says capacity

 12 building.

 13 So it's capacity building of internal

 14 staff, community partners, interagency

 15 collaboration and sector partnerships. So sectors

 16 meaning, in our case, customer service and

 17 technology.

 18 So that was kind of the visual of

 19 trying to bring everything together, we are talking

 20 about the business and we are talking about the

 21 person.

 22 And then Evolve Employment came to be

 23 and for that I'm going to turn it over to Jon to

 24 talk about our target population, our goals and our

 25 objectives.

 58

 1 MR. BENSON: Thank you, Natasha. I'm

 2 gonna start first of all by just taking a very

 3 brief moment to recognize Natasha, she mentioned

 4 tears, agony and a huge amount of work that went

 5 into putting together this grant application. And

 6 then at the end of the day, as she shared with you,

 7 we are a select group to have received that and

 8 it's very notable and historical in many ways. So

 9 just to underscore the point, we are very fortunate

 10 to have as our director Ms. Jerde.

 11 (Clapping.)

 12 MR. BENSON: I don't know anyone else

 13 who could have done this in a short of period of

 14 time and got all this stuff that needed to be

 15 accomplished, got it done. And yeah, there were

 16 tears, there were probably sleepless nights and a

 17 lot of other things, but if you get a chance to say

 18 thank you, she's the one to thank.

 19 All right. Let's talk about what this

 20 is all about. So this is about target populations.

 21 This is for individuals who acquire -- there are

 22 several groups here. We are really talking about

 23 individuals who acquire vision loss during their

 24 working years.

 25 There are three groups, primarily.

 59

 1 One is incumbent workers at risk for or

 2 experiencing recent job loss, we see that fairly

 3 often; new Americans with particular attention to

 4 the Somali community in St. Cloud and the Twin

 5 Cities; and last, individuals who have detached

 6 from the workforce for more than 27 weeks.

 7 A couple of important notes. We do

 8 not need to use the same eligibility criteria as

 9 our VR program, this is not the VR program, it's a

 10 grant that is separate from that. This is focused

 11 on adults, not students, and our goal is to reach

 12 and serve approximately 800 individuals and

 13 approximately 500 businesses.

 14 So Goal 1, implementing a rapid

 15 engagement coordinated team approach. What are we

 16 going to do? How are we going to do that? We have

 17 some objectives.

 18 Objective 1 is to offer a three-tiered

 19 portfolio of career services that include

 20 universal, targeted and intensive approaches for at

 21 risk Blind, low vision and DeafBlind individuals

 22 and businesses.

 23 Objective 2 -- by the way, we are

 24 using the acronym for that, BLVDB. It will take us

 25 all a while to get to that point in remembering it,

 60

 1 but that's the one we are using.

 2 Objective 2. Create a coordinated

 3 team approach to support individuals who acquired

 4 BLVDB in retaining and obtaining employment as part

 5 of Tier 2 and 3 services. So stay tuned, we'll get

 6 to what those tiers are.

 7 Objective 3. Enhance community

 8 partner and interagency collaboration for serving

 9 at-risk BLVDB individuals through specialized

 10 training and capacity and skill building.

 11 Goal 2. Build a sector-based approach

 12 for advanced technology careers. Objective 1.

 13 Establish and strengthen sector partnerships with

 14 businesses and organizations in the customer

 15 service and technology sector.

 16 Objective 2. Develop and implement

 17 cutting edge technology tools and training to

 18 support BLVDB individuals in obtaining careers in

 19 the CST sectors, customer service and technology

 20 sectors.

 21 Objective 3. Through a -- was there a

 22 question? I'm sorry.

 23 (No response.)

 24 MR. BENSON: No, all right.

 25 Objective 3. Through a collaborative

 61

 1 effort with partners and business, create a

 2 customized CST career readiness training program

 3 that prepares at risk BLVDB individuals to enter

 4 this sector.

 5 Goal 3. Pilot an enhanced progress

 6 model in two communities which are St. Cloud and

 7 the Twin Cities. Objective 1. Support staff in

 8 utilizing an EPE Model, enhanced progress

 9 employment model, to create meaningful career

 10 opportunities and pathways that align with the good

 11 jobs principles. If you are not sure what those

 12 are, we can explain them.

 13 Objective 2. Create a network of

 14 businesses, community-based organizations and

 15 subject matter experts that support the CIE

 16 outcomes of new Americans participating in EPE. I

 17 know there is a ton of acronyms.

 18 And Objective 3. Implement the EPE

 19 model with new Americans in two pilot locations,

 20 those of which we have already identified as

 21 St. Cloud and the Twin Cities.

 22 So, we've come down to the three tiers

 23 of services and that's what we've got here.

 24 MS. JERDE: All right.

 25 MR. BENSON: So go ahead.

 62

 1 MS. JERDE: So the first tier of

 2 services is what we are calling universal i.e. this

 3 is your outreach and engagement and building

 4 connections. So the people that we are targeting

 5 for Tier 1 are these employers who know nothing

 6 about our services, they are not aware that SSB

 7 even exists. It's also employers who are in need

 8 of light touch guidance and support, perhaps they

 9 are thinking of ways to have a more accessible

 10 workplace, they are struggling with digital

 11 accessibility.

 12 This is for individuals who have never

 13 been connected to SSB and it's for all of our

 14 community partners that we have not connected with

 15 but we would love to have them a part of our group.

 16 And essentially these are people who are not part

 17 of the VR program.

 18 Under universal services, these are

 19 things like information and referral, outreach,

 20 spreading the word, it's developing those business

 21 partnerships with industries, the customer service

 22 and technology industries. It's offering training

 23 and professional development to community partners

 24 and people. It's doing quick systems and

 25 environment accessibility scans and really the

 63

 1 expected outcomes is that we are going to have new

 2 partnerships, potentially future customers and an

 3 increased knowledge of who SSB is and what we can

 4 provide.

 5 And then Tier 2 is what we call

 6 targeted or target services. These services are

 7 geared towards those employers who have an employee

 8 and they need that retention help, how do I keep

 9 this employee, they just found out they are losing

 10 their vision or they had an accident and their

 11 vision has changed, I want to keep this employee,

 12 but I don't know where to start.

 13 It's also for those employees like, I

 14 can share, we had someone at DEED who recently had

 15 cancer in her eye and had an inoculation. She

 16 still has one eye and in that eye 20/20 vision,

 17 however, that doesn't meet our eligibility

 18 criteria. She wouldn't be eligible for our VR

 19 services, but she is saying I need help, I don't

 20 think I can work anymore, like I don't know where

 21 to start. This is where the grant steps in,

 22 because she wouldn't be eligible for VR, but she

 23 could get those services under here.

 24 Tier 2 services are we are going to

 25 get in rapidly. An employer calls, an individual

 64

 1 calls hey, I don't even know where to start. The

 2 expectation is within a day or two someone is out

 3 at that worksite working with the employer. We

 4 have a peer mentorship and support component where

 5 people with lived experience are working directly

 6 with that person from the get-go because we know if

 7 you have a support team around you and you have

 8 someone you can talk to that has been through it,

 9 that's a totally different journey than someone who

 10 has no one.

 11 This is where we are going to

 12 introduce Adjustment to Blindness Training. Can we

 13 get in and do some short-term interventions? Some

 14 people we work with aren't ready for a full blown

 15 Adjustment to Blindness Training program just

 16 because they don't understand what that is, but can

 17 we do a baby step and introduce that at this point?

 18 And at some point there may be a need

 19 for my more intensive services and at that point we

 20 would refer them to the VR program. If they are

 21 going to do a full blown Adjustment to Blindness

 22 Training program, if they actually need to go back

 23 to school because, yeah, like they are just not

 24 interested in keeping their job that they have and

 25 they want to get retrained, they would go through

 65

 1 the VR program.

 2 But the goal of the targeted services

 3 is job retention and a diversion from Social

 4 Security benefits and also develop those business

 5 relationships.

 6 At this point we can talk about how do

 7 we implement technology and accessibility into the

 8 workplace. How do we support both the employer and

 9 the person with those accommodations and

 10 technology.

 11 And then Tier 3 services. These are

 12 the intensive services. Folks who are receiving

 13 these are going to be VR participants, but they

 14 will be tracked also as a DIF participant. These

 15 are for folks who acquire a vision loss and they

 16 need those longer term services. Or maybe they are

 17 like, you know, I am not interested in keeping this

 18 job anymore, so then they would work with us.

 19 These are for new Americans with

 20 blindness or low vision or DeafBlindness, people

 21 who have lost their job and have been out of work

 22 for a very long period of time. And this is where

 23 we are going to do a wraparound approach, we are

 24 going to be implementing something called enhanced

 25 progressive employment. What that is is we start

 66

 1 getting people into the workforce early, we

 2 incorporated benefits analysis, we incorporate

 3 technology and technology training and there is no

 4 such thing as you are not ready to work with

 5 enhanced progressive employment.

 6 We are also going to be looking at

 7 high tech solutions and here we are going to be

 8 implementing this customer service and technology

 9 training program which we are going to be

 10 developing in collaboration with business to

 11 actually create a program that people can get work

 12 at the end of it.

 13 And so the outcome of Tier 3 services

 14 are more applications for the services, more

 15 positive outcomes, more people going into this

 16 industry, customer service and technology. This

 17 industry is one of what's called a drive for five

 18 industry in Minnesota. The governor identified

 19 five areas in Minnesota that have high demand, high

 20 growth and a worker shortage. Technology is one of

 21 those drive for five sectors.

 22 Our also expected benefit is people

 23 are earning well above SGA or that substantial

 24 gainful activity, meaning they are working off the

 25 benefits and that people are staying in jobs so

 67

 1 that post-outcomes that they are staying.

 2 All right. We have staffing and

 3 what's next left, your call, Judy.

 4 MS. SANDERS: Oh, if you are ready for

 5 a break, is everybody ready to smile?

 6 SILAS O'CONNOR: Oh.

 7 MS. SANDERS: Silas is ready. I don't

 8 know if they allow people under, no, over six,

 9 something like that.

 10 Anyway, how do you want to do this, do

 11 we have a plan for how we are going to line up for

 12 the picture? In the past we've gone out in the

 13 hall.

 14 MS. JERDE: In front of the Mission,

 15 Mission on the wall.

 16 MS. SANDERS: Well, the last time I

 17 did it I don't know that we had a mission yet, it's

 18 been a while since I have been in one of these.

 19 MR. O'CONNOR: I'm used to the quick

 20 screen shot button.

 21 MS. JERDE: We can go out, there's

 22 kind of a metal Braille kind of statue on the wall,

 23 we will go right there.

 24 (Break taken from 7:23 to 7:31 p.m.)

 25 MS. SANDERS: So we are going to turn

 68

 1 it back to Natasha if she can remember where she

 2 left off she just gets to keep going.

 3 MS. JERDE: Well, before I turn it

 4 over to Jon, Pat had an amazing question that I

 5 hope she can reask to the Council.

 6 MS. MCGEE: I hope I --

 7 MS. JERDE: Hit the button one more

 8 time. There we go.

 9 MS. MCGEE: Okay. My question is

 10 about the last program. So it's my understanding

 11 from the discussion about Tier 1, 2 and 3 that at

 12 some level this might be work for a person who has

 13 yet to lose their vision totally, so they wouldn't

 14 qualify for the VR program, but they are losing

 15 their vision and know that at some point in the

 16 future they will be going Blind and they will be

 17 unable to do their job.

 18 Is that the type of client that one

 19 would qualify for this program and how would they

 20 go about applying for it?

 21 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. Yes, I

 22 mean, that is exactly the person. It's also people

 23 who maybe they got that initial diagnosis but maybe

 24 they don't have any changes in their vision yet,

 25 but they know it's coming. Because why would we

 69

 1 want to wait if we can get training in place right

 2 away.

 3 And how you or anyone would apply?

 4 Well, that's a little bit TBD. The first year is

 5 going to be getting this all set up and how this is

 6 all going to work. But there will be a way for

 7 people to connect, so they do not need to meet,

 8 like you don't have to have 20/60 or like you could

 9 have one eye and it's just impacting you, we are

 10 not going to have estrogen eligibility.

 11 MS. MCGEE: Okay, all right, thank

 12 you.

 13 MS. JERDE: You are welcome.

 14 Any other questions about everything

 15 so far before I turn it over to Jon to talk about

 16 who we are hiring?

 17 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb.

 18 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

 19 MR. O'CONNOR: Can you tell me again

 20 the longest acronym in SSB history, Blind, low

 21 vision, Deafblind, is there someone else in there,

 22 another group?

 23 MS. JERDE: Nope.

 24 MR. O'CONNOR: Oh, that's it?

 25 MS. JERDE: That's it.

 70

 1 MR. O'CONNOR: I thought there was

 2 another letter. Thank you.

 3 MS. JERDE: We could have another

 4 letter if you want.

 5 MS. SANDERS: What is the Guinness

 6 World Record for acronyms?

 7 MS. HARRIMAN: This is Hannah, I had

 8 one quick question as well.

 9 MS. SANDERS: Yes.

 10 MS. HARRIMAN: This sounds like a

 11 great, you know, innovation fund and a great grant

 12 that we received. I guess my question is: Just

 13 looking at clients that we are already serving

 14 through SSB, is allocating this money not to meet

 15 current SSB clients, does that in any way

 16 negatively impact them or their services or are

 17 there ways that we could still use this funding to

 18 support VR customers and clients who are still in

 19 that same position of being adults and wanting to

 20 foster and maintain relationships with their

 21 business employers that may already be Blind or

 22 visually impaired? I hope that question makes

 23 sense.

 24 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha, yes, it

 25 absolutely does. And there are people that we are

 71

 1 working with currently on our caseloads that will

 2 be able to tap into this grant. So, for instance,

 3 many of our Somali job seekers could potentially

 4 benefit from our Tier 3 services.

 5 We are also going to be encouraging

 6 not just individuals who are those three target

 7 populations, but if there are individuals who want

 8 to get into the customer service and technology

 9 field, we are not going to prevent them from

 10 participating in that training program or from

 11 working with businesses to get hired. So we are

 12 not going to limit that, but we are just going to

 13 be actively seeking those three groups to

 14 participate in the program. And I hope that

 15 answered your question.

 16 MS. HARRIMAN: Yep, it did, thank you.

 17 MS. MCGEE: Natasha, this is Pat.

 18 MS. JERDE: Push your button, there

 19 you go.

 20 MS. MCGEE: So my question again is:

 21 Is the program just limited to getting people into

 22 customer service and technology?

 23 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha, no,

 24 that's just one of our --

 25 MS. MCGEE: One of the options?

 72

 1 MS. JERDE: One of the options.

 2 MS. MCGEE: Okay, thank you.

 3 MS. JERDE: Some people only focus --

 4 when they submit for a grant they focus on one tiny

 5 thing that they want to try out, but our thought

 6 was we want to do a multifaceted approach because

 7 we want there to be options and we want to be able

 8 to maximize the money to provide opportunity for

 9 people so we have done kind of a multifaceted

 10 approach.

 11 MS. MCGEE: Okay.

 12 MR. VELLIA: Hi, Patrick speaking.

 13 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Patrick. Curious

 14 when BVI became BLVDB?

 15 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. It's

 16 nothing formal, it's because we were writing

 17 Minnesotans who were Blind, low vision and

 18 Deafblind about 800 times in the application and we

 19 only had 45 pages and we were at 70 so we needed to

 20 find ways to shrink the size of our document. So

 21 it's nothing like fancy or formal, it's purely

 22 because we ran out of room.

 23 MR. VELLIA: Blind, visually impaired

 24 but now we are more politically correct by changing

 25 visually impaired to low vision.

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 1 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. Yep, we

 2 are making that move as well. We started with our

 3 website and changing visual impairment to low

 4 vision. Our Mission, which is on the wall, still

 5 says visually impaired, so that's another Council

 6 topic, not for today.

 7 MS. SANDERS: Take down the wall.

 8 MS. JERDE: But with that I'm gonna

 9 turn it over to Jon to talk about staffing.

 10 MR. JENSEN: Thank you, Natasha. Just

 11 a quick comment on the last comment is I think

 12 literally we are like counting the number of words

 13 in this application because there was a cutoff of,

 14 as you pointed out, how many pages. So it was like

 15 where can we cut, where can we cut and not lose

 16 what we want to achieve here.

 17 All right. So it's gonna take a team

 18 to make this thing happen and as we all know our

 19 existing staff, they are doing their work that they

 20 are here to do and so we have put together what we

 21 believe will be the right team to accomplish the

 22 work of this grant over the next five years.

 23 We are going to have a project manager

 24 who is going to manage the entire project and make

 25 sure timelines are met and work plan is followed,

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 1 in fact, this is the first hire we are making.

 2 Natasha, myself and Lindsey Hanson have been

 3 working on a position description for this position

 4 that has, as we speak, actually been accomplished.

 5 Now it's a matter of putting it through our HR

 6 system and getting it approved and start to move on

 7 with that hire.

 8 We are going to hire a benefit

 9 planning specialist to provide early benefit plans

 10 and support and guidance to Social Security

 11 recipients, again that might be anybody who we work

 12 with.

 13 New American business engagement

 14 specialist. That is a person who is going to work

 15 directly with new Americans and businesses to

 16 facilitate all components of EPE. We are looking

 17 at a retention specialist who will be a main point

 18 of contact for all retention related services. We

 19 are looking for a CST sector specialist, for

 20 business engagement in the CST sector. And we are

 21 looking to hire seven career navigators to provide

 22 career related services directly to customers,

 23 proposed one CN to every two adult caseload

 24 counselors.

 25 So each one of those career

 75

 1 navigators, the CN, will be assigned to supporting

 2 and working with counselors. We don't expect

 3 counselors to do the bulk of the work with the

 4 individuals, particularly for those other than

 5 those who are eligible and who become customers in

 6 the program. For those folk who may not be in the

 7 program, meaning they have not been determined

 8 eligible either because they are not VR eligible

 9 because for some reason they may choose not to

 10 apply if they might even be, we are going to expect

 11 probably to have our career navigators be the point

 12 people to work with those individuals.

 13 There is a lot here that we have to

 14 accomplish. We have to develop the position

 15 descriptions, we have to develop the actual ideas

 16 in terms of how are we going to track this, how are

 17 we going to process this, what types of documents

 18 between these so the people who are going to do

 19 this work are going to know what to do and how to

 20 do it. This is building it from scratch,

 21 basically, so there will be some real work in this

 22 the first year, but it's going to be exciting work

 23 too.

 24 And more exciting as well as the fact

 25 that we are looking to hire around 12 people in

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 1 this, that's going to be great for our program over

 2 all and it's going to be great for people who need

 3 either an experience or want to try something

 4 different and this is where they can do it.

 5 Now, we do have some in-house folk who

 6 are going to be helping with this and working on

 7 this. One is going to be our director, Natasha,

 8 she is going to provide overall direction and

 9 oversight.

 10 Another person is going to be me, the

 11 deputy director of program services, I'm gonna be

 12 responsible for managing and supervising oversight

 13 of the leadership key personnel.

 14 Our employment and training manager,

 15 that's Lindsey, so we are going to have that close

 16 relationship with that supervision of existing

 17 staff to support goals and objectives because we

 18 expect to see some real connecting there with our,

 19 well, let's go down the list because these are the

 20 folks who she supervises in many respects.

 21 Our English language learning

 22 specialist in terms of language literacy support.

 23 Our outreach specialist in terms of assisting in

 24 outreach and engagement efforts, that's basically

 25 the Lisas. Our contracts specialists, that would

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 1 be Jennifer and Susan, establishing new contracts

 2 with partners. Our fiscal coordinators, there

 3 again we are looking at Gabby and Monitue as well

 4 as Chris, financial reporting and oversight on

 5 their part. And then our data analysts, data

 6 analytics and reporting.

 7 So we have existing staff with

 8 existing functions that are going to be supporting

 9 this effort as well in this grant and we feel very

 10 fortunate to have already a nice solid group there

 11 that will be part of this.

 12 All right. Other staff alignment and

 13 coordination. So the employment and training team,

 14 that's Lindsey's team, will work closely together

 15 with the evolve employment team, those are the

 16 folks that we just talked about earlier, to ensure

 17 that the goals and objectives of the grant are met.

 18 With the introduction of career

 19 navigators the employment specialists will have

 20 more capacity for direct business engagement and

 21 the development of employment and training

 22 opportunities for both VR and evolve employment

 23 customers.

 24 Our assistive technologists will

 25 bolster their advanced technology skills and

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 1 expertise through intensive professional

 2 development and training, becoming leaders in

 3 cutting edge technologies.

 4 I will just take a quick pause there,

 5 I'd like to reflect back on the discussion we had

 6 earlier regarding CVS and the color identification.

 7 I see this as the perfect kind of thing for this

 8 program to work on, this grant and our

 9 technologists working on something that will solve

 10 and resolve that issue. So to me it's a great

 11 opportunity.

 12 And last, the O & M and rehab teaching

 13 staff will provide support and training to evolve

 14 employment customers as necessary.

 15 MS. JERDE: All right. Get involved,

 16 because I'm hoping you'll be involved. So there

 17 are some committees and task forces that will be

 18 formed. The first is, and I'm actually going to

 19 start with the second one because I think it's most

 20 important, is proposing to form an SRC-B Evolve

 21 Employment Advisory Task Force. I'm assuming a

 22 vote would be required to establish and form the

 23 membership.

 24 And then this task force would meet on

 25 whatever schedule the task force establishes. They

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 1 would be providing advice and guidance throughout

 2 the whole five year term of the grant, they would

 3 be essentially our accountability group because

 4 they would be receiving all the updates, the report

 5 outs, the data. They are the ones that would be

 6 questioning, well why did you make that decision,

 7 have you considered this?

 8 So the SRC-B Task Force is actually

 9 was one that when we got our grant application

 10 results back that they praised the fact that we

 11 were including the State Rehab Council as part of

 12 this, in fact, I think we were one of the only ones

 13 who included the State Rehab Council as part of it.

 14 The second is our Evolve Employment

 15 Steering Committee. This is comprised of our key

 16 staff and contractors. The chair of the SRC-B Task

 17 Force that I just talked about, the chair of a

 18 Customer Service and Technology Task Force, which I

 19 will talk about.

 20 This Steering Committee, they meet

 21 frequently and they are the ones ensuring that we

 22 have forward momentum. They are the ones that are

 23 attending meetings with RSA, our Federal partner,

 24 as needed. This committee -- and all of them are

 25 either facilitated or chaired by the project

 80

 1 manager who is yet to be hired, though the SRC-B

 2 would be chaired by someone of the Council's

 3 choosing.

 4 And then we have the Customer Service

 5 and Technology Advisory Task Force. This is

 6 comprised primarily of employers and professionals

 7 in that sector. They would be the ones providing

 8 advice and guidance on our business engagement

 9 efforts and they will be helping create the

 10 training curriculum that we will be creating. And

 11 that is it, that is the fairly maybe 5,000 foot

 12 overview. Any other questions?

 13 MS. O'CONNOR: Briley.

 14 MS. SANDERS: Briley.

 15 MS. O'CONNOR: Yes. How do your

 16 community partners fit into this? So how do you

 17 see us helping with these initiatives?

 18 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. So we

 19 will eventually be doing a request for proposals,

 20 much like people who are currently contracting with

 21 us for the VR program, we are going to be issuing a

 22 similar but not quite the same request for

 23 proposals that community partners can then submit

 24 their application or their letter of interest.

 25 Jennifer Beilke knows this process

 81

 1 much better than I, but we do not have that

 2 language drafted yet. We want to first develop our

 3 project manager, because a project manager needs to

 4 be a part of this conversation. But I can say some

 5 of the services we would be including in there is a

 6 peer mentorship component, technology, advanced

 7 technology training. I would say short term

 8 adjustment to Blind training, because the longer

 9 term full program is offered to VR customers and so

 10 we would use that contract.

 11 So those are the some of the things

 12 that we will be RFPing out for. I may anticipate

 13 we may be RFPing out for a few other things, but

 14 those are the ones that most come to mind.

 15 MS. SANDERS: Any other questions?

 16 MR. SALISBURY: Justin Salisbury with

 17 a question.

 18 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Justin.

 19 MR. SALISBURY: Yes. So I've learned

 20 recently that one of the areas that we currently

 21 have to go outside the agency to community partners

 22 for is within the technology realm when customers

 23 need to get training on how to use Google Docs,

 24 Google Calendar, Google Suite things, because

 25 that's a thing that the expertise for that exists

 82

 1 only out in the community partners. And I'm

 2 wondering if, because those seem to be getting

 3 pretty widespread in a lot of places, if that can

 4 be one of those things that we try to include in

 5 the professional development training for the

 6 adaptive technology folks so that that can be

 7 something that can be provided in-house as well?

 8 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. That is

 9 an excellent idea. One of the conversations that

 10 we have been having with that team is we are not

 11 just talking about assistive technology, like JAWS

 12 or Zoom text, we are talking about the whole gamut

 13 of what technology is and how to use that. How do

 14 you teach someone to use ChatGPT, for instance? How

 15 do you teach someone to use OneDrive or Google

 16 Docs, all of those things you are saying, Justin,

 17 and that is absolutely a must for our technologists

 18 to be trained on all of that so that they can train

 19 others.

 20 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb.

 21 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

 22 MR. O'CONNOR: So I will just share

 23 here one of the ideas that Natasha and I talked

 24 about early on, too, was technology could include

 25 app and web development with accessibility in mind,

 83

 1 particularly from the Blind, low vision and

 2 DeafBlind community.

 3 So there's a lot of us who like

 4 accessible apps, we have a lot of ideas of how an

 5 app should work. There are very few developers who

 6 can tell you how it actually gets to that state.

 7 And so if that, the way that we have made the web

 8 more accessible, has been Blind people in the code

 9 creating an opportunity for Blind developers to

 10 learn the most modern of programming languages,

 11 this training does not exist. The documentation

 12 does not exist. It is all like what you learn on

 13 the job.

 14 So I'm really excited that this is the

 15 kind of thing where we could fund some of that

 16 innovation and creativity and build something that

 17 will probably last a lot longer than the five year

 18 program.

 19 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Last call for

 20 questions or comments on this particular thing?

 21 MS. FLAX: Sam.

 22 MS. SANDERS: Sam.

 23 MS. FLAX: I just want to say

 24 congratulations again for getting the grant. I

 25 know grant writing isn't something a lot of people

 84

 1 like doing, I'm one of the weird people who does

 2 love it, but sometimes when you are cutting down

 3 those words it can really get to you. So I just

 4 want to say I think this really sounds like an

 5 amazing opportunity and I look forward to being

 6 able to do what I can to help with it and just

 7 congratulations on getting it.

 8 MR. O'CONNOR: The only blindness

 9 agency ever?

 10 MS. JERDE: So there are blindness

 11 agencies that have been like copartners or

 12 coauthors, as far as we know not one has ever

 13 directly received a grant as a primary, I think we

 14 are the only one.

 15 MR. HOBSON: That's awesome.

 16 (Clapping.)

 17 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Do you get to

 18 brag about this at NCSAB or CSAVR, that would be

 19 more fun?

 20 MS. JERDE: Actually I have been. I

 21 talked to Steve Witterson, he's the CEO, he is

 22 super, super excited. We recently had a radio

 23 interview and Finance & Commerce released a little

 24 announcement, so we are getting a little traction.

 25 MR. ANDREWS: I saw you on the roof

 85

 1 yelling the other day.

 2 MS. JERDE: Dave, you are not supposed

 3 to tell people that.

 4 MS. SANDERS: Okay. I think it's time

 5 to move on.

 6 We are going to move onto the

 7 committees, but before we actually get to the usual

 8 committees I want to know, Ryan, would you like to

 9 do your Budget Task Force report?

 10 Are you still there, Ryan?

 11 MR. STRUNK: I am, I was just chasing

 12 the mute button, here I am.

 13 MS. SANDERS: Okay.

 14 MR. STRUNK: So yes, I will happily do

 15 a report if it's convenient to do it now?

 16 MS. SANDERS: It is.

 17 MR. STRUNK: Okay. So I did send out

 18 the Excel file containing the expenses up through

 19 August as we received them on the committee. And

 20 we find ourselves in a bit of an interesting

 21 situation and that is that the budget routinely

 22 holds about $37,000, but this year we have only

 23 spent $11,000 of those dollars.

 24 Now in most state government

 25 situations what you would try to do is, and maybe

 86

 1 state government has changed since I worked in it,

 2 oh, 16 years ago, but you tried to make sure that

 3 you spent every last penny you had because you

 4 wanted to make sure you got the same the next year.

 5 We have been very fortunate in our

 6 work with SSB, with members of the SRC-B, to have

 7 support for the budget as it stands right now. And

 8 I think that's particularly important because of

 9 the situation that we find ourselves in.

 10 As Judy and I discussed a couple of

 11 days ago, the pandemic has gotten us into a

 12 situation where people are more remote than they

 13 otherwise were, you know. I myself had a work

 14 conflict come up at the last moment today and so

 15 here I am joining remote so that I didn't have to

 16 rush over there at the last moment.

 17 And so we spend less on mileage than

 18 we used to, less on in-state travel than we used

 19 to. In addition, we find ourselves having lower

 20 expenses this year around captioning and

 21 interpretation, but that also may be due in this

 22 moment to the makeup of the Council.

 23 For example, a couple of years ago

 24 many of you may remember that we had both a

 25 Deafblind Committee that utilized a number of

 87

 1 interpreters, that we had a number of members of

 2 the Council who used an interpreter and et cetera,

 3 and so we don't want to necessarily take money away

 4 from that as well.

 5 So while the expenses this year are

 6 lower, we also think that it's probably worth

 7 figuring out over a longer period of time what the

 8 trends are for the Council, as well as I think

 9 overall what the Council would recommend as far as

 10 what changes ought to be done as we get some of

 11 these longer term understandings. So if, for

 12 example, we end up having a greater need for

 13 interpretation, that's money that we would want to

 14 keep there. If we find methods of enticing people

 15 to come back and to have everybody in person that's

 16 going to raise those expenses as well.

 17 So our recommendation is that we do

 18 not seek any meaningful change to the budget this

 19 time around because we need to take the time to

 20 analyze the things that I just laid out.

 21 MS. SANDERS: Okay. So we have to

 22 move approval. What?

 23 MR. HOBSON: Sorry, I'm talking to

 24 myself.

 25 MS. SANDERS: Oh, sorry.

 88

 1 We have to move approval and so you

 2 are maintaining that we retain -- we would move to

 3 retain the same budget that we currently have for

 4 the next year; is that correct?

 5 MR. STRUNK: Yes, ma'am, that is

 6 correct.

 7 MS. SANDERS: So is that a motion?

 8 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, second.

 9 MR. STRUNK: There you go. I move

 10 that we maintain the same budget as we proposed

 11 last year.

 12 MS. SANDERS: All right. And seconded

 13 by Rob Hobson. Any discussion before we vote on

 14 that?

 15 MR. HART: Rocky Hart.

 16 MS. SANDERS: Rocky.

 17 MR. HART: Yeah, I just want to

 18 clarify when you say that the allocation for

 19 interpreters and captioners is lower, is there an

 20 allocation for that in the budget that the Council

 21 is about to approve?

 22 MR. STRUNK: So let me clarify that,

 23 Rocky, in case I misspoke. The expenses this year

 24 for interpreters and captioners is lower, but the

 25 allocation has remained the same.

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 1 So what we are recommending

 2 allocating, I'm scrolling down as quick as I can

 3 here but I want to get you the exact number, so

 4 Veritext -- in fact, Veritext closed captioning I

 5 would amend this in the moment because it occurs to

 6 me that we may need to make an adjustment here, but

 7 Veritext closed captioning was not budgeted for

 8 this year and we spent $2,900 there, but I do think

 9 it's also possible that we bundle this into other

 10 purchased services and interpreters. And that

 11 number, Rocky, was $7,820. We have spent none of

 12 that.

 13 MR. HART: Okay. I just wanted to

 14 make sure there was money in the budget in case

 15 that expense comes up, so.

 16 MR. STRUNK: Yes, sir, absolutely.

 17 MR. HART: Thank you.

 18 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb.

 19 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

 20 MR. O'CONNOR: So just to clarify,

 21 Ryan, the document that you shared, the budget we

 22 are approving is the tab that says FFY24, that

 23 would be the period October 1 of this year to

 24 through September 30 of next year, just using the

 25 same as column, I think it was, B, right?

 90

 1 MR. STRUNK: Yes.

 2 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay, thanks.

 3 MS. SANDERS: Any last questions or

 4 comments?

 5 MR. VELLIA: This is Patrick.

 6 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Patrick.

 7 MR. VELLIA: Patrick speaking. Is

 8 that budget for the interpreters and captioning, is

 9 that included for the Deafblind Committee as well

 10 or just for the Council?

 11 MS. SANDERS: Yes.

 12 MR. STRUNK: That is correct.

 13 MS. SANDERS: So just as the DeafBlind

 14 Committee's budget was included last year, it will

 15 stay the same.

 16 Okay. We are going to vote.

 17 Sue.

 18 MS. FAGER: Yes.

 19 MS. SANDERS: Sam.

 20 MS. FLAX: Yes.

 21 MS. SANDERS: Hannah.

 22 MS. HARRIMAN: Yes.

 23 MS. SANDERS: Ryan H.

 24 MR. HAENZE: Yes.

 25 MS. SANDERS: Tom.

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 1 MR. HEINL: Yes.

 2 MS. SANDERS: Thea.

 3 MS. KRAMER: Yes.

 4 MS. SANDERS: And Pat McGee.

 5 MS. MCGEE: Yes.

 6 MS. SANDERS: Jeff Milhelich.

 7 MR. MILHELICH: Yes.

 8 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

 9 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes.

 10 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Justin.

 11 MR. SALISBURY: Yes.

 12 MS. SANDERS: And Ryan Strunk.

 13 MR. STRUNK: Yes.

 14 MS. SANDERS: Patrick.

 15 MR. VELLIA: Yes.

 16 MS. SANDERS: And Judy votes yes. The

 17 budget is approved. Thank you.

 18 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb, sorry, one other

 19 quick note.

 20 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Corbb.

 21 MR. O'CONNOR: Glad we approved it

 22 because now we can't change it. I just wanted to

 23 clarify, too, the per diems and stuff for

 24 conferences was blank, but I'm assuming it was just

 25 accounted for elsewhere.

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 1 Do you have a rough idea, Ryan, what

 2 the Budget Task Force took into consideration of

 3 how many people generally attend conferences so

 4 when we come up for discussing this in the spring

 5 we have a record of what we thought in the budget

 6 of how many people we would be sending roughly?

 7 MR. STRUNK: You know, when we

 8 discussed this, that the attendance is going to be

 9 low in the fall, that should give us quite a bit of

 10 money available next year to be able to send

 11 people. We did not have a specific number that we

 12 allocated, though, because of, you know, as you are

 13 seeing with the Council this year some people are

 14 going to part and not the whole thing and that kind

 15 of thing.

 16 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you.

 17 MR. STRUNK: Yep.

 18 MS. SANDERS: Okay. I assume that we

 19 can move on, right?

 20 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes, um-hmm.

 21 MS. SANDERS: Justin, did you want to

 22 say anything about the Needs Assessment Task Force

 23 or are you waiting on that?

 24 MR. SALISBURY: This is Justin. I am

 25 happy to, just very briefly. The task force that's

 93

 1 here to work on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs

 2 Assessment has been meeting. We have been meeting

 3 the last Tuesday of every month and we have been

 4 reviewing a document that Jennifer Beilke has been

 5 working hard to update and expand. That ultimately

 6 is a request for proposals or an RFP so that we can

 7 get a vendor that will then conduct that

 8 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. That is

 9 my report.

 10 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Thank you very

 11 much. Are there any questions?

 12 (No response.)

 13 MS. SANDERS: If not we shall go into

 14 the regular committees that we always have and the

 15 memberships.

 16 The State Rehabilitation, I don't

 17 know, do we have anybody in the general Rehab

 18 Council? We don't, do we. I don't think so.

 19 Okay. With respect to the SILC, the

 20 Statewide Independent Living Council, I am on that

 21 Council and it's interesting when we talk about

 22 expenditures. They for the first time have spent

 23 most of their money. They have been way under in

 24 the past, but they did much better this time on

 25 spending it.

 94

 1 And they also are looking for people.

 2 They have the same problem as we do when it takes

 3 their time to, you know, appoint people they are

 4 terrible. I mean, it's not them and it's not us,

 5 it's the governor's office. And by the way, it's

 6 been several governor's offices that live like

 7 that.

 8 And one of the things I would ask is

 9 that if somebody is interested in applying for both

 10 the SILC and SRC-B and you are willing to serve on

 11 both councils, then you would be that

 12 representative and you would report.

 13 The same thing would apply for the

 14 State Rehab Council, if you are willing to serve on

 15 both of them that gives us, you know, we can share

 16 what we need to. And now is the time to think

 17 about applying for those things. So that's all I

 18 have to say about that, I think.

 19 How about a Communication Center

 20 report, do we have one?

 21 MR. JACOBSON: Yeah, I have one.

 22 MS. SANDERS: Okay.

 23 MR. JACOBSON: It will be quick

 24 though. First I wasn't sure from what you said at

 25 the outset if you wanted us to report on the Annual

 95

 1 Report status, I did submit my report for last

 2 year.

 3 MS. SANDERS: Yes, thank you.

 4 MR. JACOBSON: And I am the chair for

 5 the coming year. So the Communication Center

 6 Committee met in June which was reported on at the

 7 August meeting. We are still getting organized for

 8 the coming year and are hoping to get something

 9 scheduled within the next month or two and so

 10 that's my report.

 11 MS. SANDERS: Thank you and I'm glad

 12 your report is done.

 13 The Community Partners Outcomes and

 14 Measures Committee. That report is done as well

 15 for full disclosure. And let me think, well, Steve

 16 Sawczyn, did you want to report on that meeting

 17 that you had?

 18 MR. SAWCZYN: I can be very brief.

 19 MS. SANDERS: Yeah.

 20 MR. SAWCZYN: So I am new to the whole

 21 process so thank you everyone for patience and for

 22 answering all my crazy questions.

 23 We did meet and we've been talking

 24 about -- my understanding is that there has been a

 25 discussion around whether or not it might make

 96

 1 sense to look at conducting some sort of focus

 2 group or trying to obtain information in a way

 3 other than the survey that might give us more

 4 information, more current information. And that

 5 led into a broader discussion of what can we do

 6 with the technology we have, specifically the

 7 technology that powers the survey, what might we

 8 gain or lose if we went a direction of involving

 9 focus groups, how would we do that logistically?

 10 And so we are hoping to get some more

 11 information from some people about where those

 12 options might lead us. But the broader -- I guess

 13 the broader thing we are looking at as a group is

 14 can we get more actionable, more current

 15 information in another way other than the standard

 16 survey? Or how would doing that compare with the

 17 standard survey that we have?

 18 And so that's where we are at and we

 19 are meeting again here pretty quickly, so hopefully

 20 I'll have more information for the Council next

 21 time.

 22 MS. SANDERS: Thank you. I'm assuming

 23 if someone doesn't stop me that you are not seeking

 24 questions on any of these reports.

 25 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb.

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 1 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Corbb.

 2 MR. O'CONNOR: I was just going to

 3 say, Sawczyn, if you need any guidance from what we

 4 have done in past years, feel free to holler at me.

 5 MR. SAWCZYN: Awesome, okay, yep.

 6 MS. SANDERS: And if you do holler, be

 7 polite.

 8 MR. SAWCZYN: I will holler softly.

 9 MS. SANDERS: Okay. But carry a big

 10 stick.

 11 MR. SAWCZYN: And carry a white cane

 12 or something.

 13 MS. SANDERS: Yeah, that's even

 14 better.

 15 Okay. Corbb, were you done with your

 16 Customer Satisfaction thing from earlier or do you

 17 want to say anything else?

 18 MR. O'CONNOR: No report at this time.

 19 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Patrick, do you

 20 have a Deafblind Committee report?

 21 MR. VELLIA: Patrick speaking. I got

 22 to report by October 14, but since our last meeting

 23 remember I mentioned that John Filek got promoted

 24 as executive director for HKMC so he was no longer

 25 on the Deafblind Committee so I replaced him with

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 1 Maya Larson from the Commission for the deaf and

 2 DeafBlind and hard of hearing. Darlene approved

 3 for her to be on the committee as part of the

 4 commission so it doesn't have to be Maya by

 5 herself.

 6 MS. SANDERS: Patrick, I'm going to

 7 interrupt you for a moment because you can

 8 recommend that she be on and if she is interested,

 9 then we need to accept that recommendation and vote

 10 for her to be on that committee. So are you saying

 11 that she does want to serve on it?

 12 MR. VELLIA: Clarify, you mean I need

 13 to have a motion to have Maya officially join the

 14 committee?

 15 MS. SANDERS: Yes.

 16 MR. VELLIA: Oh, I thought Judy and I

 17 were emailing back in August so you mean I need to

 18 get a motion now to have you --

 19 MS. SANDERS: Yes.

 20 MR. VELLIA: -- to put Maya officially

 21 on the committee?

 22 MS. SANDERS: Yes.

 23 MR. VELLIA: So can I put out a motion

 24 now to have Maya Larson join the committee as a

 25 replacement for John?

 99

 1 MS. SANDERS: Yes, you can.

 2 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, so moved.

 3 MS. SANDERS: Well, Pat moved, you

 4 will second.

 5 MR. HOBSON: Oh, second, sorry.

 6 Second, that works.

 7 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Is there anyone

 8 else that you need to include or does that make

 9 your committee full? I don't remember where we

 10 were on the count for that one?

 11 MS. HARRIMAN: This is Hannah, I am

 12 also on the committee.

 13 MS. SANDERS: Hang on a second,

 14 Hannah, we will get to you next.

 15 Patrick, it's full, right? We have

 16 seven.

 17 MR. VELLIA: Hannah Harriman is on the

 18 committee, right?

 19 MS. HARRIMAN: Yep, that's what I was

 20 just saying, that I'm on the committee as well.

 21 MS. SANDERS: But you were voted onto

 22 it in August.

 23 MS. HARRIMAN: August.

 24 MS. SANDERS: Yeah, you were already

 25 included on it.

 100

 1 MS. HARRIMAN: Okay, perfect.

 2 MR. VELLIA: Let me go over who is on

 3 the Committee because during the August meeting I

 4 got confused with Hannah Edwards from SSB being on

 5 the committee, since Harriman wasn't there so let

 6 me review who is on the committee.

 7 We got myself, Ann Mayes, Rocky,

 8 right, Rocky Hart?

 9 MR. HART: Yes.

 10 MR. VELLIA: Lindsey from SSB, Hannah

 11 Edwards from SSB, Wendy DeVore.

 12 MS. SANDERS: When we say that you

 13 need seven that does not count SSB staff because

 14 they can use whatever staff they wish, so you are

 15 okay.

 16 MR. VELLIA: All right. So let me

 17 take out Lindsey and Edwards from the Council, so

 18 we've got myself, Rocky, Ann Mayes, Wendy DeVore,

 19 Maya Larson, Hannah Harriman.

 20 MS. SANDERS: I think you counted

 21 Hannah twice.

 22 MR. VELLIA: Am I missing somebody,

 23 I'm not sure.

 24 MS. SANDERS: I think you are good.

 25 MS. VANG: This is Nyia speaking, I

 101

 1 have a list of the committee members. There is

 2 only six including Patrick and not including SSB

 3 staff.

 4 MS. SANDERS: Okay. But now we just

 5 are voting on the seventh person who would not be

 6 on your list, Maya Larson, so she'll be the seventh

 7 person.

 8 MS. VANG: Okay.

 9 MS. SANDERS: Thank you.

 10 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb, just for

 11 clarification. I thought we were saying John

 12 Filek, was he on the list initially, Nyia?

 13 MS. SANDERS: No.

 14 MR. O'CONNOR: He was not, thank you.

 15 THE INTERPRETER: This is the

 16 interpreter clarifying for Patrick.

 17 MS. SANDERS: Yes.

 18 THE INTERPRETER: So it was going to

 19 be John, but they replaced John with the new

 20 person?

 21 MS. SANDERS: Yes, but last August we

 22 knew that John wasn't on it. He was not on the

 23 list that Nyia has.

 24 THE INTERPRETER: Yep, I was just

 25 clarifying what you said.

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 1 MS. SANDERS: Okay, all right. So we

 2 are accepting Maya to be on the Deafblind

 3 Committee.

 4 Sue, how do you vote?

 5 MS. FAGER: I don't have a microphone

 6 close, so I will project my voice and say yes.

 7 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Sam.

 8 MS. FLAX: Yes.

 9 MS. SANDERS: Hannah.

 10 MS. HARRIMAN: Yes.

 11 MS. SANDERS: Ryan H.

 12 MR. HAENZE: Yes.

 13 MS. SANDERS: Tom Heinl.

 14 MR. HEINL: Yes.

 15 MS. SANDERS: Thea.

 16 MS. KRAMER: Yes.

 17 MS. SANDERS: Pat McGee.

 18 MS. MCGEE: Yes.

 19 MS. SANDERS: Jeff Milhelich.

 20 MR. MILHELICH: Yes.

 21 MS. SANDERS: Corbb O'Connor.

 22 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes.

 23 MS. SANDERS: Justin Salisbury.

 24 MR. SALISBURY: Yes.

 25 MS. SANDERS: Ryan Strunk.

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 1 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk, yes.

 2 MS. SANDERS: And Patrick.

 3 MR. VELLIA: Yes -- I abstain since

 4 it's my committee.

 5 MS. SANDERS: Oh, I thought that's why

 6 you'd vote yes. I'm gonna vote yes for any

 7 committee I'm on. So you can vote if you wish, but

 8 you can abstain as well if you wish.

 9 And I am voting yes. The motion

 10 passes.

 11 All right. Was that it, Pat?

 12 MS. VELLIA: Yes.

 13 MS. SANDERS: So your next meeting is

 14 October 14; is that correct?

 15 MR. VELLIA: I think so.

 16 MS. SANDERS: Okay.

 17 MR. VELLIA: I will double-check.

 18 MS. HARRIMAN: This is Hannah, just a

 19 clarification. Our next meeting is next Tuesday,

 20 October 8.

 21 MR. VELLIA: Yes.

 22 MS. SANDERS: Oh, Tuesday, October 8.

 23 Good. All right, thank you.

 24 DEI Committee, Sam.

 25 MS. FLAX: So I am in the process of

 104

 1 getting that meeting scheduled, apologies for the

 2 delay, but that announcement should be coming out

 3 in the next week or so.

 4 MS. SANDERS: Okay. And have you done

 5 a committee report yet?

 6 MS. FLAX: I was not the chair.

 7 MS. SANDERS: Oh, that's right.

 8 MS. FLAX: Yeah, I think that was

 9 Briley. I can talk to her about that, unless she

 10 wants to take over and say if that's been done.

 11 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Briley, have you

 12 written one yet by any chance?

 13 (No response.)

 14 MS. SANDERS: Hello?

 15 MS. FLAX: I can follow up with her.

 16 MS. SANDERS: All right.

 17 MS. O'CONNOR: Can you hear me?

 18 MS. FLAX: Oh, there she is.

 19 MS. SANDERS: Yeah, now we can.

 20 MS. O'CONNOR: Okay. Sorry, my phone

 21 is being slow.

 22 So I haven't written it yet, but thank

 23 you for the reminder. I will have it in before

 24 October 15.

 25 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Thank you very

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 1 much, that's good to know.

 2 And Patrick, have you submitted

 3 anything for last year for the Deafblind Committee?

 4 MR. VELLIA: Well, I've been on the

 5 committee since 2019, but I have only --

 6 THE INTERPRETER: Have you submitted

 7 the update, is that what you are asking about?

 8 MS. FLAX: Who was the chair last

 9 year?

 10 MS. SANDERS: Do you remember, Corbb?

 11 MR. VELLIA: Trevor Turner.

 12 MS. SANDERS: Oh, that's true. So I

 13 don't think -- I doubt whether we will get

 14 something from Travis -- from Trevor, that would be

 15 my guess. So if you were on the committee,

 16 Patrick, and all you need are a couple of

 17 paragraphs of what the committee did and we can

 18 talk about it maybe some and figure it out.

 19 Okay. Employment, who was doing

 20 Employment?

 21 MR. VELLIA: This is Patrick.

 22 MR. SALISBURY: Justin Salisbury.

 23 MR. VELLIA: I plan to get with

 24 Lindsey to help me work with that since she was

 25 managing the committee.

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 1 MS. SANDERS: Sure, that will be

 2 great.

 3 MR. VELLIA: She has all the minutes

 4 and everything.

 5 MS. SANDERS: Yep, that will work

 6 perfectly.

 7 Justin, yeah.

 8 MR. SALISBURY: Yes. This is Justin

 9 Salisbury, I am the chair this year for the

 10 Employment Committee.

 11 MS. SANDERS: Right.

 12 MR. SALISBURY: As an update the

 13 Employment Committee has set a routine of meeting

 14 on the third Monday of each month from 12:00 p.m.

 15 to 12:30 p.m. that's a 30 minute meeting at

 16 lunchtime, beginning our meetings in October.

 17 So our first meeting will be

 18 October 21 from 12:00 o'clock p.m. to 12:30 p.m.

 19 The committee meetings will occur October 21,

 20 November 18 and December 16, again from

 21 12:00 o'clock p.m. to 12:30 p.m.

 22 And we know that our meetings need to

 23 be posted online with links included in them so

 24 that I can support public participation. And we

 25 are working to get our announcements posted.

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 1 One of the updates that was made to

 2 the focus of this committee in the process of

 3 revising committee structures and over the summer

 4 is that we are now also emphasizing the discussion

 5 of job retention data, especially with the ethical

 6 implications of being able to inform new customers

 7 of the job retention rates that we are seeing

 8 within the VR program in our state. That is our

 9 report and happy to take questions.

 10 MS. FLAX: Sam.

 11 MS. SANDERS: Sam.

 12 MS. FLAX: Just a quick note that I

 13 did submit today the employment report, Justin I

 14 will send it to you for your reference as we get

 15 started for this year.

 16 MS. SANDERS: Very good, you guys are

 17 doing great with all of this stuff.

 18 All right. The Senior Services

 19 Committee report is in. Pat McGee, though, do you

 20 want to report?

 21 MS. MCGEE: Yes, I can. We had a

 22 meeting for the Senior Services Committee earlier

 23 today and that will be in the future when we do

 24 have the meetings starting at 3:30 on the day that

 25 the Council is meeting.

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 1 And the previous chair, Judy, was very

 2 nice to get the report in for the Senior Services

 3 Committee so I don't have to manufacture something.

 4 And one of the things we are thinking about working

 5 with now is looking more closely at the Aging Eyes

 6 initiative and some of the partners that work on

 7 that program, just to get a better understanding of

 8 what's happening with that. And I think that's

 9 about it.

 10 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Now you can say I

 11 was very nice to do it, it is the job of the past

 12 chair to write the report.

 13 MS. MCGEE: Yeah, I know, but you were

 14 very nice to do it.

 15 MS. SANDERS: I am saying it for all

 16 committees.

 17 MS. FLAX: We should all be as nice as

 18 Judy and do our jobs I guess.

 19 MS. MCGEE: I am buttering you up,

 20 come on.

 21 MS. SANDERS: Oh, okay, thanks, I like

 22 it.

 23 MR. ANDREWS: What she is saying, Pat,

 24 is next year if you are not chair you will still

 25 have to do the report.

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 1 MS. SANDERS: He's got it, yes.

 2 Okay. We have a Transition Committee

 3 report, do we have one of those? And we can check

 4 about whose going to write that one.

 5 MS. FLAX: I already submitted it

 6 today.

 7 MS. SANDERS: Hey, you did a good job

 8 today, you were busy.

 9 MS. FLAX: Thank you. I never said

 10 they were good.

 11 MS. SANDERS: I did and I haven't even

 12 looked at them yet.

 13 MS. FLAX: But you can't take it back

 14 now.

 15 MS. SANDERS: All right. Are there

 16 any last committee reports that we have forgotten?

 17 SILAS O'CONNOR: Yes.

 18 MS. SANDERS: What?

 19 SILAS O'CONNOR: Oh, no.

 20 MS. SANDERS: I believed you.

 21 MR. O'CONNOR: For those on Zoom,

 22 Silas just said in a very deep monster voice, yes.

 23 MR. HOBSON: I was starting to wonder

 24 who was sitting over there.

 25 MS. SANDERS: All right. What time is

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 1 it?

 2 MR. HOBSON: 8:15.

 3 MS. SANDERS: We have public comment,

 4 ladies and gentlemen, is there any?

 5 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb.

 6 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

 7 MR. O'CONNOR: The National Federation

 8 of the Blind of Minnesota will be holding our

 9 annual convention November 1 to 3 at the Doubletree

 10 St. Paul East, just a quick, well, shotput throw

 11 from here. And we are starting at 9:00 a.m. on

 12 Friday. We will conclude at noon on Sunday. So we

 13 encourage everyone who is able to join us.

 14 And we will also be excited and

 15 privileged to be hosting an SSB town hall on Friday

 16 just before dinner, that's scheduled for about 5:00

 17 p.m., not totally locked in yet, but I believe it's

 18 about 5:00 p.m. on that Friday.

 19 MS. SANDERS: Excuse me, can you

 20 explain what a SSB town hall is?

 21 MS. JERDE: This is Tasha, it's an

 22 opportunity for, I will do a little hey, this is

 23 some of the updates, and then allow for public

 24 comment, questions. Basically in a town hall

 25 anything goes, just don't be too mean to me.

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 1 And it will also be an opportunity for

 2 people to weigh in on rulemaking. The request for

 3 comments isn't out yet, but if people want to

 4 provide some input or some ideas for hey, if you

 5 are going to be doing the rule you should consider

 6 this, it would be an opportunity for that as well.

 7 MS. SANDERS: All right, okay. Any

 8 other public comment?

 9 MR. O'CONNOR: And you can register at

 10 NFB@mn.org. Thank you very much.

 11 MS. SANDERS: You are welcome.

 12 MS. ROGERS: This is Lisa Rogers, I

 13 have a question for Corbb.

 14 MS. SANDERS: Yes.

 15 MS. ROGERS: Corbb, can you tell me

 16 where I find information on exhibiting for that

 17 conference?

 18 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes, I will email it to

 19 you.

 20 MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much.

 21 MS. SANDERS: Ask and you shall have.

 22 Any other public comment?

 23 (No response.)

 24 MS. FLAX: Sam.

 25 MS. SANDERS: Sam.

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 1 MS. FLAX: An announcement that this

 2 February, on February 8, we will be hosting a

 3 Braille challenge in Minnesota. For those of you

 4 who don't know, it's essentially a competition for

 5 Braille readers, I believe 1st grade through 12th

 6 grade. So if anyone knows any students who maybe

 7 you want to win some prizes, maybe even get to go

 8 to California if they win, for the national

 9 competition. I can send out more details, that

 10 sort of thing, but just wanted to make sure that

 11 people had it on their radar.

 12 MS. SANDERS: When you say we will be

 13 hosting who is the host?

 14 MS. FLAX: The host is BrightWorks, I

 15 believe it's called, and there is a bunch of

 16 different groups that have representatives, NFB,

 17 ACB, all of those groups. But it is hosted

 18 nationally, I believe, by the Braille Institute.

 19 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. I think

 20 what you are meaning to say is that Minnesota is

 21 going to have.

 22 MS. FLAX: Yes, I meant we as

 23 Minnesotans, I apologize.

 24 MS. SANDERS: Oh, okay. Because

 25 usually when we say that something is behind it.

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 1 MS. FLAX: Yes.

 2 MS. SANDERS: All right.

 3 MS. FLAX: A coalition of dedicated

 4 people to helping the Blind children of Minnesota.

 5 MS. SANDERS: All right. Any -- last

 6 call.

 7 (No response.)

 8 MR. O'CONNOR: Move we adjourn, this

 9 is Corbb.

 10 MS. FLAX: Second. Silas thirds.

 11 MS. SANDERS: That's right. And, you

 12 know, usually we do a roll call can we just submit

 13 that we are going to adjourn?

 14 MR. O'CONNOR: I would love to do

 15 that, we would be violating our bylaws.

 16 MS. SANDERS: I know, but whose going

 17 to report us?

 18 MR. O'CONNOR: I think the name is

 19 Kim, Kim reporting.

 20 MS. SANDERS: All right. Sue.

 21 MS. FAGER: Yes.

 22 MS. SANDERS: Sam.

 23 MS. FLAX: I kind of just want to say

 24 no to be confusing, but yes.

 25 MS. SANDERS: Hannah.

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 1 MS. HARRIMAN: Yes.

 2 MS. SANDERS: Ryan H.

 3 (No response.)

 4 MS. SANDERS: Ryan H.

 5 (No response.)

 6 MS. SANDERS: Tom Heinl.

 7 MR. HEINL: Yes.

 8 MS. SANDERS: Thea.

 9 MS. KRAMER: Yes.

 10 MS. SANDERS: Pat McGee.

 11 MS. MCGEE: Yes.

 12 MS. SANDERS: Jeff Milhelich.

 13 MR. MILHELICH: Yes.

 14 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

 15 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes.

 16 MS. SANDERS: Justin.

 17 MR. SALISBURY: Yes.

 18 MS. SANDERS: Ryan Strunk.

 19 MR. STRUNK: Yes.

 20 MS. SANDERS: Patricia V -- Pat V.

 21 Patrick.

 22 MR. VELLIA: Yes.

 23 MS. SANDERS: And Judy votes yes, we

 24 are adjourned. Thank you.

 25 (Meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m.)

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 1 STATE OF MINNESOTA)

 2 ) ss.

 3 COUNTY OF HENNEPIN)

 4

 5

 6

 7 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

 8

 9 I, Kimberly K. Evavold, do hereby

 10 certify that the above and foregoing transcript,

 11 consisting of the preceding 114 pages is a correct

 12 transcript of my stenographic notes, and is a full, true

 13 and complete transcript of the proceedings to the best of

 14 my ability.

 15 Dated: October 12, 2024

 16

 17 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 KIMBERLY K. EVAVOLD

 18 Court Reporter

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